

Elsword Time Trouble Volume 3

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0. I won't let it end like this

Flames burn the world.

Dry silence and blood, dark warrior standing majestically amidst the smoke.

Her appearance, with tight clothes and a giant sword leaning on her shoulder looked overwhelmingly proud, lonely..... and beautiful.

Black Panther who broke out of her cage and regained her freedom. She was a dangerous beast where you couldn't tell which direction her fangs were going to target next. But you couldn't deny that she was beautiful.

Add was so overwhelmed by her appearance that he couldn't even move a finger or avert his gaze.

“Ren.....”

Words couldn't leave his mouth. Shouting to confirm if Rena was alive or not in this situation was the worst thing he could do right now. If that dark warrior started to move, she'd get to Rena much faster than they could.

They should obviously abandon Rena and retreat while preserving their remaining forces.

While suppressing anger, shock and fear welling up from within..... Add made his conclusion. This was the only way.

But the other person didn't think the same.

“Ms.Rena!!”

White clothes rushed in swiftly like the wind. She didn't show any hint of hesitation despite how she was running into a dark warrior who had just displayed terrifying strength. She rushed forwards straightly without wavering while everyone else was frozen from fear and disbelief.

Ara threw off her hairpin and thrust her spear towards Elesis with all the strength she could muster.

“Hah?”

Elesis swung her sword lightly with one arm to deflect the spear as if Ara's attack was laughable. Ara's stance as she held onto her spear shook heavily from just Elesis' single swing.

Elesis had deflected the spear containing full force of Ara's two arms and broke her stance. She did this without even looking properly towards Ara and only with a one armed sword swing. Even

someone who wasn't experienced in close quarters combat could quickly tell that the gap between two of their skills was incomparably large.

As a martial artist, Ara who had witnessed this personally should know this better than anyone else.

"Mr.Add!! Quickly! To Ms.Rena!!"

But Ara didn't back out despite clearly knowing the skill difference between her and the enemy.

Ara's white hair waved as she ceaselessly thrust her spear with a display of fighting spirit that she won't back off no matter what.

"You're no good."

Elesis let out a half-amused laugh then swung her sword to match Ara's attacks as if she was going to play along with her for a bit. With each blow, each strike that was exchanged, Ara's body got pushed back and you could see her suppressing her pain.

Add watched this confrontation between white spear and dark-red sword then he finally came to his senses.

Ara was literally staking her life in order to buy him time right now!!

"I'm joining in!"

Eve who came running also realized the situation right away and fired a missile at Elesis. But Elesis swung her sword widely to push back Ara and then seamlessly made an exquisite turn to even deflect the missile that flew in towards her.

Booom!!

Sound of an explosion rang out in mid air. Add who had been standing frozen also made his decision. This was a battlefield, although he didn't want to, the battle had already started.

"Elsword!!"

Add hastily called Elsword beside him. Ara and Eve were fighting their best but they were overwhelmingly outmatched. They couldn't hope to face Elesis by themselves.

Each and every helping hand was precious right now.

"...."

But Elsword only blinked vacantly and wasn't holding up his sword. There was no life in his eyes. He was completely out of it.

"Don't lose your mind right now!"

“...Big Sister.”

Like a broken doll, Elsword didn't move no matter how urgently Add pinched his cheeks and shook his shoulders.

It seemed his mental shock was so great that he couldn't accept the scene in front of him as the truth.

“Dammit!!”

Add who was in the middle of shaking Elsword grabbing him by the collar gave up and quickly got on his Dynamos. He wasted too much time. Even people that could have been saved will die in this much time.

Add was able to safely arrive in front of Rena because Ara and Eve were keeping Elesis occupied.

Rena's condition as she lay collapsed on the ground was critical. Wound that cut across from her chest to abdomen was very deep.

There wasn't too much blood but it wasn't something to be glad about. The reason for this deep wound but almost no blood....was because Elesis's fire had evaporated the blood. It was to an extent where Add had to withstand the heat when he put his hands on Rena's wound It wouldn't be wrong to say that her insides got roasted.

Still, judging by how her chest moved up and down, she was still alive.

“Rena!! Hang in there!!”

Add called her name then looked through his clothes to pull out a recovery potion. But these types of potions that were used to heal wounds didn't act immediately and acted over time. Also, all they did was boost natural recovery. This was at best an emergency measure to keep her alive.... But he had to do whatever he could.

When Add poured the potion, Rena's breathing became slightly steadier. Add quickly looked back after at least applying an emergency treatment. Ara was somehow exchanging spears and swords with Elesis thanks to Eve's assistance but the situation was way too precarious.

“Ugh!”

More small wounds formed on Ara's body as she swallowed a scream like groan each time they exchanged attacks. It was definitely not a situation where they could hold out for long. He had to somehow gather everyone and evacuate..... But how?

There was no way Elesis will stand by idly as the El Search Party retreated.

“Add.....”

While pondering, Add looked down after hearing a dim voice. Rena was making small coughs while trying to hold up her hand.

“It’s fine. I stopped the wound for now.”

He had sprayed a potion so this wasn’t a lie. But....the problem was that this wound was something she’ll die from. It was actually more surprising that she didn’t die instantly considering how she got consumed by flames that were overwhelming enough to evaporate blood.

Even Add who wasn’t a doctor could tell that Rena being alive right now and how she could move her hand was a miracle.

“Don’t move and try to stay conscious. We’ll take you and retreat right away.”

“How....the others?”

It was hard to make out Rena’s voice because it was so small and sparse.

It also didn’t help that he could hear Ara, Eve and Elesis’s mixed shouts from his back, and a storm of shouts and screams from the far away battlefield. Despite this, Add focused so that he wouldn’t miss each and every single word that Rena spoke.

“It’s fine. Everyone is okay.”

They were still fine for now. But won’t they all get annihilated after 5 minutes, no 2 minutes?

“I, I see..... Cough.”

“Don’t speak!”

Despite Add trying to stop her, Rena moved her lips while still panting. Rena held up her shaking hand as if she wanted to press out her words before she lost consciousness. Add quickly grabbed her hand. It seemed she couldn’t even see properly.

“You....promised right? Please.... take care of....the other kids.”

“.....”

Her last words had to be something this lame?

“Please.....”

“Okay! I got it so don’t speak!!”

Add went numb for a moment then answered hastily. It looked like his words had reached Rena because she made a faint smile while exhaling deeply.

Strength was leaving from her hand that Add was grabbing onto.



“.....Ah.”

She was still alive but her life was very thin. Add bit his lips after sensing that Rena didn't have long to live. This was nonsense.

“....At least beg for your own life. Why...even till the end....”

She wouldn't have ended up like this if she hadn't tried to save Add. But she wasn't resentful at all and didn't show any signs of regret.

“Even till the end, worrying about those kids....”

Add grabbed his fists tightly at the sudden surge of powerful emotion. Add bit his lips so hard to the point where they bled. He felt like he wouldn't be able to hold in this emotion anymore if he spoke, because he'd recall his past memories.

He then tightly grabbed Rena's weak hand that was about to fall. So that he wouldn't lose her.

“Don't make me laugh.....”

He couldn't accept this outcome. No. He couldn't let this be. At least, it couldn't and shouldn't end this way.

“You want me to end up babysitting those kids? Don't make me laugh.....”

Add transformed his boiling emotions into harsh words as he stood up.

Add took a deep breath then looked up towards the sky. Sky was dyed in red from the flames.

He absolutely hated this kind of sky.

“Ara!!”

“Yes!!”

Scream like answer came from far away and the sound of spear and sword clashing continued. He could tell that it was a critical situation even without turning back.

“Come here! Eun!”

“If boy wishes.”

Ara's eyes seemed to narrow then her spear skills suddenly changed. If her spear skills were precise and swift before, now it was heavy and held weight. Elesis paused when the attribute of her enemy's spear skills changed. Eun used this chance to make a large thrust with her spear then distanced herself quickly with continuous somersaults.

Eun landed behind Add's back then spoke with a smile.

“Well, what will you do now, boy?”

“Shut up.”

Add replied with a frightening voice then manipulated the Dynamos to create a Time Stream Wormhole.

“I’m time traveling.”

“But isn’t Eve still safe?”

That’s why he wasn’t looking back. He didn’t have to look. Eve was probably using this chance to go check on Elsword’s condition. Also, they could probably use this chance of Elesis pausing to escape.

While leaving Rena to die.

“I know that already without you having to telling me.... But you must have wanted this kind of stupid situation.”

Did Eun already know that Rena would end up like this? He couldn’t tell if Eun knew or not. But....she wouldn’t have told him even if she knew.

“I’ll comply if that’s what boy wishes. Now, tell me the time you want. It looks like Elly will charge in for an attack at any moment.”

“I’m going back to.... Before the battle started.”

Add only looked forwards and didn’t look back in order to collect his heart.

Eve was still safe. So he didn’t have any reason to time travel. He knew that already.

He knew.... But he didn’t like this.

“I’ll fight properly this time.”

“Huhu, fine. Then go ahead, boy.”

Eun’s hand started to shine brightly with white light.

Crash!!

His face smashed into the ground. Add spat out the dirt that got into his mouth then brought his body up. Eun must have played a mean trick as she sent him.

“That damned fox....”

Anyways, confirming that he had time traveled correctly came first. Just when Add was about to stand up by pushing the ground, he realized that he had time traveled correctly.

Rena was in front of his eyes and judging from the surrounding structure, this was inside one of the personal tents. The fact that the Velder Liberation Army suffering from lack of supplies even lent personal tents to the El Search Party was a proof that the party was being treated as a very important ally.

“.....Add?”

The problem here was...why was Rena in the middle of changing her clothes?

Rena’s voluminous body as she was taking off her El Officer uniform and her well-rounded breasts came directly into his view. But Add’s face didn’t heat up and he instead let out a troubled sigh. No, his face did actually heat up, but that was a physiological reaction and his head was actually cool.

I’m going to go crazy, seriously.

If I ever get the chance, I’m going to hang that damned fox upside down and torture her. I’m going to make her beg for her life as I pull out every hair from her tail one by one.

When Rena slowly covered her body with her hands, Add let out an extremely deep sigh then waved his hand.

“I’m sorry, finish changing for now.”

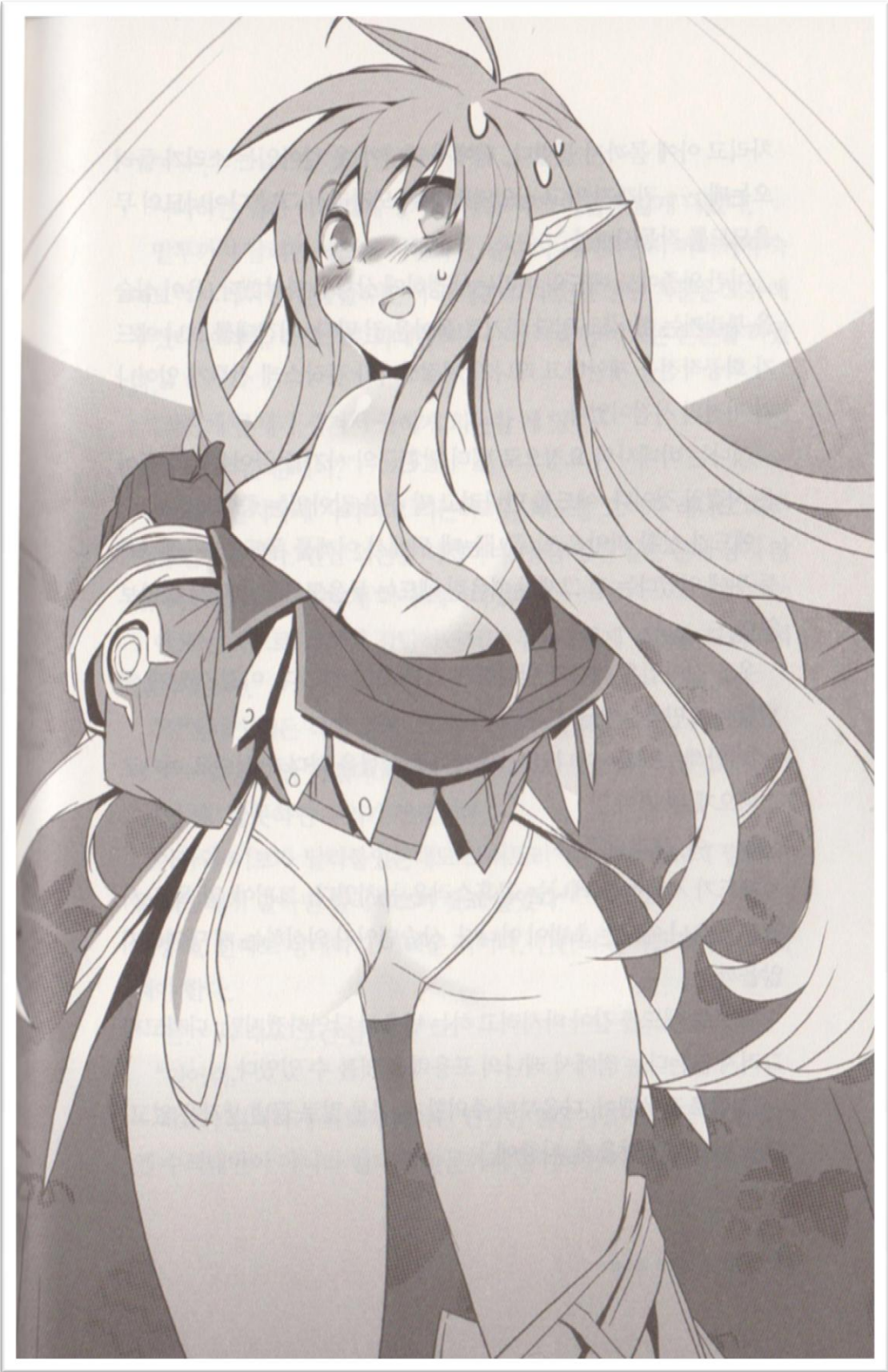
“.....Oh, okay.”

While covering his face with both of his hands, Add came to his senses and turned around. He could hear Rena changing from behind him.... He wanted to even cover up his ears but he didn’t have enough hands so he just activated the Dynamo’s mute mode.

Even through all this, Add’s head coldly analyzed the situation. Eun had played a mean trick but he did come back to the past. Judging by the time, this was right before the battle started in the middle of Rena refusing Add’s suggestion to attack with fire.

Rena had probably just come back from raising the solders’ morale according to Vanessa’s request. She was probably changing clothes to meet with Add now.

Just when Add was finishing his situational analysis, his shoulders were tapped. After recalling that Rena was behind him, Add turned off the mute mode and turned back.



Rena had finished changing and was now staring at him with a helpless expression. Her face was looked like she was pondering about how she should punish him.

“I’m sorry, it wasn’t on purpose. I came here by mistake while experimenting with space warp.”

“.....Oh? Really?”

Rena looked puzzled when Add apologized. Well, there was also the bath case so this wasn’t Add’s first offense. Wouldn’t it be obvious for her to suspect if he was a habitual offender?

Well any other person would be livid at Add by now, but you could tell how magnanimous Rena was by seeing how she wasn’t.

“I’m really sorry. I’ll be careful from now on. Of course, I don’t plan to just end this with words. I’ll take any punishment you give me. But later.”

“....”

He was forced to learn how to apologize from Ara so it wasn’t difficult to bring these words out of his mouth.

When Add, even changing the tone of his voice apologized calmly while bowing, Rena nodded as she sighed. It meant that she’ll postpone the issue for now. After being successful in postponing the issue, Add brought up the main topic.

“There’s a problem with the plan. I got something urgent to discuss with you.”

“I see, so what’s the problem?”

Rena also calmly accepted when Add apologized seriously and showed an attitude of wanting to discuss something important. Not calling into question what happened just now because Add wanted to discuss something, this was so like Rena.

Add admired her attitude quite a lot internally as he spoke stiffly without showing his emotions.

“There’s an enemy that’s difficult to face. So division won’t work.”

“.....You won’t do the divisionary tactic?”

“No we won’t. We’ll get annihilated if we aren’t careful.”

Even when Ara and Eve went after Elesis together, never mind defeating her, they got pushed back instead. If you exaggerated it a bit, Elesis was toying with them.

A powerful enemy, she was an enemy that was really difficult to face. They had to clash with full preparations.

“Hmm, even so that’s a bit.....”

“Please trust me.”

Rena looked troubled when Add asked seriously. This war was a large fight that included not only the El Search Party but the Velder Liberation Army as well. She couldn't change their plan just from hearing Add's baseless words.

“Demon army that weren't moving before will start to move soon. Can you trust me a bit more with this information?”

“Then....”

Booom!! They heard the sound of an explosion from far away. Rena instinctively grabbed her bow and was about to dash out of the tent. Then she stopped to look back at Add who wasn't moving.

Look of confirmation.

“.... So it's true.”

Rena looked at Add seriously then nodded. She admitted that the current situation was serious and that Add had some kind of plan.

“Then what should we do now?”

“I have a plan to break through this.”

After leaving the tent after telling Rena his plan, Add sat on the supply crate as he caught his breath. The sky was still blue.

“It looks like boy isn't feeling too well.”

“Don't speak to me.”

Add replied with a low voice. There was a continued sound of light footsteps then he heard someone standing beside him.

Add didn't even give a look at Eun standing beside him and looked only forwards.

“So, what changed this time?”

“I wonder what did.”

He thought that something drastic like Elsword growing again or something similar had happened but Eun's response was indifferent. It looked like nothing significant had changed from this time travel.

“Anyways, time traveling for Rena’s sake. That was quite surprising. Did that beautiful Elf capture the boy’s heart?”

“Don’t say something ridiculous.”

Add gave a tired response. He actually had so many things to question Eun about like why did she set the time space coordinates to that place, or why she didn’t say anything if she knew this was going to happen. But he didn’t feel like talking to her right now.

For Add, it was right after he saw how Rena had fallen. It would be stranger for him to be able to converse normally.

“We need Rena.”

“Yes, because she’s beautiful. She’s a perfect feast for the eyes. I’ve lived for a long time but this is the first time I’ve seen such a beautiful Elf. Of course, beside her is the master of blades.....”

“We need her for future fights against the demons.”

Add cut off Eun’s words and replied bluntly.

That’s right. Rena was an important fighting force. Especially for fighting such a powerful enemy like Elesis. She could attack from the furthest amongst the group, possessed leadership and most of all, her battlefield performance was exceptional.

Things went wrong because they started with Elesis’s ambush and Rena getting a critical injury from trying to save Add. It was originally a fight that was worth trying.

It was such a waste to lose such an important combatant because of a single mistake.

“There were no other alternatives in that timeline. We can’t take on Elesis without Rena. It’s natural to come back.”

“Did you really come back for that reason?”

“What else is there?”

Add spoke coldly as he stood up. The time to fight had almost approached.

“Boy still hadn’t noticed.”

“Shut up.”

Add ignored as he moved his step forwards. There was no wavering or flaw in his reasoning. They’ll hit Elesis this time with Rena included in their forces. They’ll go into the fight with full preparations and come out victorious.

Rena was just needed for that purpose. It wasn't like he made a venture of rewinding time just to save her.

“Kukukukuk.”

Add headed to the battlefield while making a vague smile.

He hated the sky that was dyed in red after all.

1. Over the death

Sky was dyed in red again.

Screams and pillars of smoke were rising from far away. Add walked forwards silently ignoring the scenes of chaos around him.

On the road that should have been normally filled with traffic, Add stopped at a four way road and measured his distance.

Preparation to meet the enemy was complete. Why did such an enemy appear all of a sudden? Why was survivor from the Red Knights that's been annihilated half a year ago now siding with the demons? Why was she getting in the way of the Velder Liberation Army that was fighting to save Velder's king and citizens?

There were so many things that needed to be known but Add put aside all of those for now. There was something more important that had to be done right now.

"If you got beat once....."

Voice of Add as he stood alone lingered in the air. As if responding to him..... Heavy tremor tore apart the silence.

Crash!!

Glitter Vanguard rushed out from the building it was hiding inside. Add smiled showing his teeth after confirming the red haired warrior standing proudly on top of the viscous metal.

"You have to pay it back!!"

Add immediately got on top of his Dynamos and started to move backwards. Add was fast as the wind when he was on top of his Dynamos. He was still slower than Ara's windwalking but he could quickly outrun a Glitter Vanguard that moved on its wheels.

When Add she had targeted immediately distanced himself and escaped, Elesis seemed to pause then did something strange.

She jumped up lightly then swung her sword downwards.

Slash!

It was a chilling sound even for Add who had heard it from afar. The object in her sword's trajectory was Glitter Vanguard she had been riding on top of just moment ago. Glitter Vanguard got sliced in half and rolled on the ground in an instant. Elesis made a single somersault in mid air and landed on the ground.

“....”

Add saw this happen with his eyes but he still found it hard to believe. Glitter Vanguard was reinforced with multiple layers of steel. Elsword and Add had to deal with it in a roundabout way because they couldn't hope to destroy it directly.

But Elesis just sliced it in half with a single slash of her sword.

“It was too slow.”

After mercilessly destroying the Glitter Vanguard, Elesis leaned her sword against her shoulder then glanced at Add sideways. Her gaze was as if she was saying did you really dare to come alone? Add winced for a moment after seeing Glitter Vanguard get destroyed by a single slash but quickly replied with a menacing smile.

“What? I thought I'd be facing the demon army. A human female is my opponent now?”

“Do we really need introductions?”

Elesis lowered her sword in an angle while making a beaming smile. It looked like her gesture was saying let's talk for now and not fight. But Add didn't let his guard down. The enemy was powerful enough to give Ara and Eve who had fought together a hard time. Someone like Add will lose his head the moment he got within the range of her sword.

Although she was smiling right now, although it was a very beautiful smile...he'll die if he's careless. Add laughed confidently in order to hide the cold sweat dripping from his back.

The distance between them was 100m. He still had some room to spare.

“Why were you hiding in such a place?”

“Why don't you come here and ask me if you're curious?”

Elesis leisurely, but slowly approached Add. Female panther laid her eyes upon her prey. It was as if she could easily devour someone like Add whenever she wanted. You could feel her leisure and mettle from her steps. Add felt like immediately turning around and running away and struggled to suppress the urge.

He had to be patient in order to make this plan a success.

“Ha, could it be that you were hiding just so you could get me?”

“Where are the others?”

Elesis didn't show much reaction from Add's provocation.

Her tone was as if she wasn't interested in Add's blabbering. Having his calculations miss their mark, Add decided to just ask directly.

"Your younger brother Elsword is on our side. Are you doing this despite knowing that fact?"

"Hmm, I wonder if he became much stronger."

"...."

For Add, this was important information that he had kept hidden. But Elesis was lightly running her finger across her sword as if this reveal was something trivial. Add got annoyed for some reason at her uncaring attitude and instinctively stretched out his hand forwards.

"Void.....!"

"Too slow."

When an alternate space was about to form in front of her, Elesis swung her sword lightly. With only that gesture, the distorting space got shattered and returned to normal.

He didn't think it would work, but for his attack to get ignored this easily...

No, actually even Ran could do this much. His ambush had gone to waste but Add collected himself.

After finishing the examination of her sword's condition with her fingertip, Elesis stared at Add and held up her sword to fix her stance. A gaze as if she wasn't interested. She was filled with an absolute confidence that there was no one that could stand in her way.

"So who should I slash apart first?"

"...."

Her tone was as if she could see through everything. Well, the difference in Add and Elesis' abilities were obvious. Elesis was judging that there was no way Add could have come out alone like this without a plan.

Add had carefully laid the trap. But his prey was judging so coldly and proudly. This wasn't good.

"Elsword was way too weak."

"Really? I thought I trained him strictly."

"Yes, he wasn't of any help and kept getting in my way so I killed him on my way here."

Elesis frowned and walked towards Add without answering. Add purposely mocked as he shrugged his shoulders.

“Kukukukuk. The sight of how he was begging for his life knowing that he was about to die was so despicab.....”

“Mr.Add!!”

Tearing scream. Did Ara misread the situation and dash out? Was she going to ruin their carefully laid plan? Add’s face got contorted but it was him that had misread the situation.

Elesis kicked the ground and charged in. It was.....so fast that it couldn’t be described as a charge.

It looked like she had kicked the ground then the distance between them which was 100m apart turned immediately to 60m. And just when Add had realized this, their distance had shrunk instantly to 3m.

Clank!!

Ara who had given up hiding for an ambush ran in fast as she could to hastily hold up her spear to block the attack. Dark-red sword that was about to shatter Add’s head was blocked by the shaft of Ara’s spear.

“.....Did you come after reading my attack beforehand? Not bad.”

“M, Mr.Add, back out!”

Ara was groaning as she tried to push Elesis’ attack off. It looked her strength was giving out.

Add was frighteningly surprised by the fact that his neck would have been chopped off if Ara hadn’t anticipated Elesis’ attack and came running to help. But Add’s head was already making cool judgements now.

“Start the plan!! Renal!!”

“Guide Arrow!!”

Five arrows poured down from the rooftop of a building behind them. Elesis who was pushing back Ara with her strength clicked her tongue and backed off. But these special arrows made out of mana never missed their targets.

When Elesis realized that these arrows kept following her no matter how much she distanced herself, she made an unpleasant face as she lowered her stance and held her sword with both of her hands.

Clink! Clink!!

Elesis’ skill as she struck and destroyed each mana compressed arrows was surprising. But it was too much for her to block all five arrows that flew in towards her simultaneously.

She managed to destroy the three but she couldn't help but to get hit by the two on her shoulder and stomach.

"Darn."

Elesis received damage and staggered while backing off. She was far away but you could tell from her pale expression that she just received a noticeable damage.

"Yep, I hate arrows after all...."

Alright. So our attacks do work on her. No matter how scary Elesis' mobility was, no matter how skilled she was at instantly closing the distance, there should be a limit to how a swordsman can react if they got arrows fired at them from a long range.

"Think you can do it?"

"Yes, I can."

The problem was that, in the end, Rena was an archer. Since their best strategy was to keep pressuring Elesis from a long range, they needed someone to tie down Elesis in close quarters. Only people capable of such a feat in the El Search Party were Elsword and Ara.... But no matter how exquisite Ara's spear skills were, it was honestly too much for her to face Elesis head on.

Should he be at least glad that Eun wasn't popping out to take over Ara's body to run away?

"I'll also assist you much as possible. But what about Eve?"

"I'm not too sure either."

Add didn't reveal beforehand about how their enemy was Elesis. But Eve should have figured it out by now. The reason for Eve not coming out despite this was obvious.

Although they had Rena's long range support, it was a complete life threatening gambit to fend off Elesis with just Add and Ara. But this situation rather comforted Add.

He couldn't let Eve get destroyed. Elesis was way too dangerous.

If Eve stayed back in order to comfort Elsword who was shocked at Elesis appearing as their enemy, then that was fine in its own way. No, it actually made Add angry but it was better than Eve getting destroyed.

"Then, we'll have to handle this by ourselves."

"Yes."

After having confronted Elesis once, Ara must have realized how great Elesis' skills were and had a very stiff expression. But Ara still nodded regardless. Even though her life would be the one that's in

the most danger, even though she knew the most about Elesis' terrifying skills from a firsthand experience, she was filled with determination.

"I'll support you the best I can so don't get nervous, and Rena will also...."

Just when Add was going over the plan again to ease Ara's nervousness, his face stiffened. Elesis took a deep breath then seemed to jump up lightly. Dark and ominous aura surrounded her.

"Ejection!!"

She made a strange stance where she turned both her sword and body backwards. Add realized that the demonic energy was gathering around her and screamed.

"Rena! Run!!"

"Buster!!"

As his scream and her shout rang across the silence and intersected with each other, Elesis ejected an enormous amount of demonic energy she had gathered towards the rooftop of the building Rena was at.

Booooooom!!

An energy wave, a giant laser of demonic energy swept across the building's rooftop. It was such a powerful attack that not just the building's rooftop but entire upper half of the building disappeared.

After neatly disposing of the annoying arrows, Elesis proudly landed on the ground.

"Arrows get annoying if left alone."

"M, Mr Add! Ms.Rena is!!"

Ara screamed but Add didn't waver. No, he was actually wavering but didn't let it show. Showing yourself waver to the enemy and your worried allies would only make things disadvantageous for them.

"Proceed according to the plan. Rena is fine."

It was a lie. But it seemed Ara didn't know what being suspicious meant and her face brightened right away.

"I'm glad!"

"That's right. It's all within expectations."

He hadn't known that Elesis could launch a long ranged attack. His original plan was to put Ara in front, Add for support then settle the fight with Rena's arrows. But the building that Rena was hiding in just got blown away completely.

Did she die? He did however point out couple of other sniping spots to Rena just in case. It would be nice if Rena had escaped before the attack hit the building. But if she didn't...

"Kukukukuk."

Add forcefully let out a laugh. He wasn't in any situation to worry about others.

Rena was possibly dead, Elsword wasn't coming out, and Eve must be beside Elsword. They had to face such a powerful enemy with only Ara and Add.

This plan was a failure. It was a rational course of action right now to bring Eun out and time travel. But Add didn't.

"Then let's start."

He had to time travel again anyways if Rena was dead. If that's the case, he had to use this chance to test out Elesis' abilities up to their limits in order to be successful next time.

He had to risk his life right now in order to win next time.

"Let's go Ara. Or you can let Eun take over if you're scared."

"No, it's an honor as a martial artist to be able to battle someone so powerful."

Ara spoke energetically then pulled out her hairpin. Her black hair got dyed in celestial white color. Nine tails shook along with her breath. Ara suppressed her fears and glared at Elesis who was approaching them confidently.

"Then, Ara Haan, engaging!"

Dark blade and white spear clashed again.

At the moment Ara energetically shouted and tried to dash out, Elesis charged in with an unbelievable speed again and closed the distance while holding up her sword. This was the second time they've seen her charge in but it was way too fast! Of course, Ara could reach such speeds as well if she ran using windwalking. But the difference between her and Elesis was the time required for them to reach their maximum speeds.

When a normal human started running, they needed a warm up time in order to reach their maximum speed. This was obvious since it was a matter of muscle and breathing.

But for Elesis, the moment she kicked the ground was her maximum speed.

"Haah!"

But Ara didn't fear and carefully examined Elesis' movements. Ara was startled at first by Elesis' sudden attack but, if you only considered speed, Ara didn't lag too far behind her. The deciding factor was the difference between their reaction speeds!

"Unlimited...."

"Energy Absorption!"

It looked like an energy orb gathered on Ara's hand then Elesis' stance as she was about to swing her sword got shaken and she couldn't continue her attack. The energy orb that Ara had gathered on her hand caused a miraculous suction effect to disturb Elesis' stance at least for an instant.

Realizing that Ara had boldly created an opening, Add also quickly made his calculations.

"Void Field!!"

Right after the Energy Absorption, an alternate space opened up across the floor and restrained Elesis' feet. Elesis' movements stopped completely from the two's continuous attacks. Ara didn't miss this chance and stabbed with her spear multiple times.

After getting stabbed multiple times by Ara's spear, Elesis frowned as she swung her sword to make Ara back off. The Void Field's duration had ended way too early.

Void Field should have normally lasted longer but it seemed that Elesis had some kind of special power. Duration of the restraint was way too short.

"The effect is....!"

But although it was for a moment, they were able to injure Elesis. Ara was rejoicing when Add screamed after realizing the dark-red demonic energies gathering on Elesis' hand.

"Don't just stand there. Dodge!"

"Huh?"

Ara looked confused but still moved to dodge. But Elesis throwing her demonic energy was faster. Ara's body stiffened as she got hit directly by the demonic energy that flew sharply towards her as if it was a throwing knife. In that instant, Elesis closed her distance between Ara almost like she was getting dragged in by a magnetic force as she swung her sword.

"Aaaaah!"

Even as Ara screamed in pain after getting hit by this sudden attack, she quickly swung her spear. Elesis for some reason backed off lightly and dodged the spear.... Surprisingly, the wounds that Ara had inflicted on her earlier with the spear had been cleanly healed.

"Did she recover?"

Add who was observing realized what just happened and was horrified. Just what was this monster?

She pressures by swinging her sword with an unreasonable speed. When they position themselves and attack from afar, she gathers demonic energy and fires it at them. And even if they create an opening at a close range and injure her, she recovers on her own?

....How can there be such a thing? Add's face turned ghastly pale even before he realized it himself. But Ara didn't mind her own injuries as she dove directly into Elesis.

"Haaaaah!"

"Hah?"

Elesis had now fully recovered her wounds and laughed amusedly. She swung her sword widely in response to Ara's attack. It was a terrifyingly powerful sword strike. Seeing this strike that contained so much force that it could break through Ara's spear and cut through her body, Add quickly stretched out his hand as he shouted.

"Void Impact!"

Add's alternate space attack happened right in the moment when Ara charged in. Elesis paused for a moment as she let out a painful groan due to the alternate space that got created on her sides.

"Kugh."

"Haaah!!"

Ara didn't miss this opening and stabbed with her spear multiple times. Elesis quickly recovered her posture and held up her sword to respond. But her sword swings didn't contain such a force like last time.

"Void..."

Elesis backed off without hesitation when Add held up his hand again in order to shatter the alternate space. She could have easily faced Ara in 1 on 1 and quickly destroyed her, but she was being mindful of Add's space attacks that came in through the openings.

At first, they had been pressured by the display of her overwhelming attacks. But Elesis was also a human in the end. She feels pain when she's stabbed and she bleeds when she's wounded.

She seemed to have an ability to recover but that looked like it had some limited conditions.

"Don't let her escape!"

Ara was already dashing in faster than Add's shout. This was a golden opportunity, if they mixed Ara's spear skills and Add's space manipulation abilities; it looked like they could match up to Elesis.

But Elesis frowned then for some reason she didn't attempt to respond to Ara's spear this time. A defenceless stance, as if she was saying go ahead and stab if you'd dare. Add was about to let fly a Void Breaker but his pupils shook widely.

"Don't stab!!"

"Pardon?"

Ara asked with a tone almost as if she was screaming but her hands had already moved forwards. Elesis' body shined gold the moment Ara's spear was about to pierce her. Ara's body flew off like the kite that got its string snapped off.

"Kyaaaah!!"

It was an abrupt reflective force. It had such a power that it didn't end with just Ara getting pushed back. Skin on Ara's arm got torn apart and she received a bone revealing wound. She was barely holding onto her spear now. Judging by how Ara's arms were trembling, it looked like she wouldn't be able to continue the battle.

"..."

She had an unreasonable swordsmanship at a close range. She quickly closes the distance and comes for their necks at mid-range. She fires concentrated demonic energy if they shoot at her from a long range. She recovers even if they injure her and launches a counter skill if they try to create an opening with a combination attack?

What kind of monster was this? She was such a monster that you couldn't believe she was a human. Add froze as he let out a groan.

"So this is..."

The strongest leader of the Red Knights, Elesis.

Ara was panting as she kneeled on one leg. Elesis approached her with haughty steps.

Elesis was completely ignoring Add because his attacks weren't effective by himself. She was trying to finish things now.

Add had tried to figure out the extent of Elesis' abilities from this plan but he had only confirmed that she was a mighty existence with no blind spots.

I can't beat this.

Add made his decision and tried to call Eun to time travel for now. But Eun showed no signs of coming out despite how much Ara was trembling and trying to stand up.

“Eun!!”

There was no answer to Add’s call. Elesis fixed the grip on her sword and slowly raised it up. Below her feet was Ara.

“Eu...”

Ara was forcefully gripping her spear with her torn arm dripping with blood. She was desperately trying to hold up her spear in defense. But this was an enemy she struggled against even when she was in a normal condition. There was no way she could face her now with such a serious injury.

“Then shall we end this?”

“Stardust....”

Elesis would easily nullify his Void Double Impact. Add’s most powerful attack, space gate opened above the sky but Elesis didn’t stop her sword.

The sword was dropping.

“No!!”

Ara will die this time!! Just when Add let out a scream, the moment when gravity orbs were about to fall late, piercing through the moment when Elesis was about to mercilessly swing down her sword,

Arrows faster than anything else came flying.

Rain of arrows suddenly poured down. Elesis frowned as she tried to deflect them but then saw the gravity orbs pouring down from a gap in the sky. She clicked her tongue as she backed off. She wasn’t swift only when she was charging in; she also swiftly backed off dozens of meters in an instant.

But even though she had dodged the gravity orbs, torrent of arrows pouring down from the building’s rooftop didn’t cease.

“Haaaah!”

With a clean shout from the rooftop, arrows continued to pour down towards every location Elesis tried to dodge. After quickly cancelling the Stardust Shower, Add unknowingly exclaimed.

“She was alive!”

Rena hadn't died from the attack that had blown away the building earlier. But time for rejoicing was short lived because Rena's urgent voice rang through the megaphone.

"Add, hurry!!"

"Got it!"

There was a limit to these arrows of fortune. Add quickly mounted the Dynamos and approached Ara to examine her condition. Ara was staggering as she managed to stand up. The wound on her left arm was so deep that he could see the tendons in her muscle and even her bones.

It was impossible for her to continue fighting like this. Rena was tying Elesis down with a torrent of arrows but that will also reach its limit soon.

"Let's retreat for now. Hurry up and call Eun!"

Eun needed to come out because he didn't know what might happen if they tried to retreat as they were now. But Ara stubbornly shook her head.

"No, I'll fight."

"What are you talking...."

Add was about to speak but shut his mouth. Ara had grabbed her spear with two hands again while letting out a painful groan.

"This much wound can be recovered by fighting. And what will happen to the other people if we retreat here?"

"....."

Add had meant it as going back to the past using time travel. But Ara must have understood it as abandoning everything and running away.

In any case, wasn't Eun way more skilled than Ara?

When Add was about to speak some reason into her, Ara stared at Elesis who was lightly dodging the torrent of arrows.

"If I turn my back and run away here, I'll also have to run away when I fight Elder Brother. I'll fight her head on and win!"

"Hey....."

She was being unreasonably stubborn. Add was so dumbfounded and tried to scold her but realized that Eun wasn't showing any signs of coming out.

Could it be that Eun was respecting Ara's unreasonable persistence? Her fighting spirit?

“Ejection Buster!!”

When the torrent of arrows that had been restlessly falling finally ended, Elesis jumped up again and gathered demonic energy. Burst that followed after, the laser mixed with dark-red flames and demonic energy blew away the building that Rena had been firing arrows from cleanly without a trace.

“I’m sorry, my plan was flawed.....”

Add unknowingly apologized after seeing another building get blown away. He had thought it was a flawless plan when he had formed it. But he honestly hadn’t known Elesis was this much of a monster with no blind spots. Even if Rena had gotten out safely from this attack, it will take her time to move to the next sniping point.

And during that time, only thing in front of Elesis’ sword was Ara and Add. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that they were good as dead.

He had miscalculated the enemy’s competence, he had to start over.

“So let’s escape for.....”

“No. It was a magnificent plan. It was my abilities that were lacking, Mr.Add.”

Ara stared at Add and smiled while courageously suppressing the pain from her wound.

“I’ll protect you Mr.Add.”

“What....”

After smiling sweetly, Ara didn’t even wait for Add’s reply as she kicked the ground and dashed forwards. Elesis had always charged in first until now but this time Ara had attacked first.

Actually, their speeds were the same. The problem was the time they took to reach their maximum speeds. In order to bridge this gap, Ara attacking first was crucial.

Ara had realized this instinctively during her previous confrontations and was charging in alone right now.

“Void Impact!!”

Add realized Ara’s intention and let out an enraged scream as he quickly finished the necessary calculations. Elesis who was about to turn towards Ara and Add after landing on the ground saw the space near her being distorted and quickly backed off while swinging her sword.

Add’s Void Impact was nullified. But using that opening, Ara’s stab went in directly as she arrived a slight moment later. Elesis was withdrawing the sword she had swung so she had no choice but to take this attack in an unstable posture.

“Hmm, it’s not too bad this time.”

Elesis smiled enjoyably as she responded to Ara’s attacks. On the other hand, Ara’s face was serious as she restlessly stabbed from various angles.

They were equals when they had both reached their maximum speeds. Spear and sword mingled chaotically.

Still, Ara was getting pushed back. Even though they were equals in speed...their power, the power behind Elesis’ swords was irrationally strong.

“Shatter!!”

Taking advantage of the opening again, Add’s space distortion went in. Ara and Elesis were so chaotically confronting each other that it was difficult to make calculations to avoid Ara getting caught up in his attacks. But he had no choice but to pull it off.

Elesis turned her head to dodge but she couldn’t help her cheek from getting torn and having blood drip down from it.

In that moment, Ara’s spear aimed at Elesis’ chest. Add quickly shouted after seeing Elesis cover herself with a golden barrier with a smile.

“Aim for her weapon!”

“Yes!”

Elesis’ chest was right in front of her but Ara withdrew her spear without hesitation and hit down on Elesis’ sword instead. Elesis made a smile as if she was saying ‘would you look at that?’

If Ara had stabbed just now, she would have gotten hit by the counter skill again and got torn apart.

“Back off for now! Void Impact!!”

Add purposely distorted the space where Ara was in. Ara didn’t get hurt because she backed off without question and Elesis who was about to rush in had to pause because of the space getting distorted in front of her.

Ara came back from confronting Elesis and was wiping the sweat off her forehead. She noticed Add’s gaze and smiled sweetly. Her arm that had been injured before to the point where her bone were being revealed was now completely back to normal.

“That’s....”

“Ah, it’s because of Lord Eun’s Clairvoyant powers. This is what happens when I fight borrowing Lord Eun’s powers.”

So you can recover while fighting enemies during the Celestial Fox State? You don't heal when you're standing still and only heal when you are fighting the enemy. It was a rather cruel activation condition but it would be ideal for the purpose of improving one's skill.

Anyways, this wasn't the time to leisurely discuss this mechanism. Ara's body had recovered thanks to her fighting bravely and it was almost time for Rena to have moved to her next sniping point.

"Then...."

At the surface, the situation didn't look too different from start of the fight. But it was actually completely different now. Add and the El Search Party now had a grasp of Elesis' abilities. On the other hand, Elesis was bleeding from her cheek.

It wasn't a significant injury but she couldn't recover naturally.

"As I thought. She can't recover freely....."

There was a chance for victory. If they looked for a chance and attacked in a one single sweep, they could even take down the mighty Elesis.

Just when Add finished his calculations and was about to speak to Ara, he noticed that the atmosphere had turned strange. Elesis would have normally charged in first but she was now leaning her sword against her shoulder and silently looking behind Add's back.

As if she had discovered something annoying, as if she saw something troublesome to face.

".....Big Sister."

A voice came from behind his back. Elsword had finally come out.

Add gave an eye gesture to Ara and slowly backed off to stand beside Elsword and Eve. Eve was holding onto Elsword's hand and gave Add an eye gesture telling him that she was sorry. It was an apology for her staying back and not coming out to fight up till now.

But this was fine. Their firepower would go up even more with Eve. Also, Elesis should get a mental burden if her little brother Elsword was here.

"Yes, Elsword."

An unexpected reunion. Elesis was answering with a leisurely face as if this was something trivial. But this was an enormous change compared to how she was trying to cut off their heads without taking any questions before.

This wasn't bad. They needed time to recover their stamina and it also took time for Rena get into her next sniping position. It was even better if he could get some information out of this.

Add made these calculations and left the siblings to talk. Although Ara was looking back and forth between Elsword and Elesis with a very confused gaze.

“You were....alive?”

“As you can see.”

Elsword’s lips shook at her answer that lacked sincerity. His drooping shoulders, Elsword was barely continuing the conversation as if he was suppressing his emotions.

“Why, if you were alive.....why didn’t you....not even a single word...that you were alive...”

“You’re talking too much in the battlefield. That’s not how I taught you.”

Elesis let out a thin sigh then lowered her stance. Add, Eve and Ara got startled by this posture and immediately got ready to respond but Elsword just stared vacantly.

“How come Big Sister.....”

“If you call yourself a knight, then speak with your sword.”

Elesis seemed to gather her breath as she replied coldly. She then kicked the ground and charged in towards them. It was many times faster than before!!

“Eve!!”

Add screamed Eve’s name at this terrifying attack. But Eve must have interpreted Add’s shout differently and she calmly responded by calling upon a weapon through the dimensional gate.

“Generate Black Hole!”

The weapon Eve called upon created a black orb. Elesis who was charging in towards the orb stopped instantly. It didn’t end with just her stopping and Elesis started to bleed from her thighs and arms as her skin started getting ripped apart from the powerful vacuum. But despite this, Elesis was making an expression as if this was nothing and was biding for a chance.

She was already used to the injury, bleeding and pain. She’ll get well quickly if she just tore apart and devoured the flesh of her enemies. Such intentions were seeped into the beautiful female panther’s eyes.

It was dangerous if they gave her an opening!

“Energy Absorption!”

“Void Field!!”

Add and Ara also came to this realization and quickly assisted in restraining Elesis. Even while she was bleeding after getting restrained triple fold by Gravity orb, energy orb and alternate space, Elesis didn't even let out a single groan as she glared at the three of them.

It was a gaze as if she was saying I'll quickly dispose all of you when this is over, it was such a terrifying pressure that it made Add's heart shrink.

"Back off if you aren't going to fight!!"

Add grabbed the back of Elsword's neck and threw him back. Elsword's body shook weakly and rolled on the ground but Add couldn't spare any moment to care about him.

"Hah!"

Rena's arrows poured down just when the three of their attacks were ending. They were miraculous arrows that had fallen in an instant when a dark beast that had escaped the cage was about to jump at the three of them.

She was probably biding for an opening to intervene.

"Darn...."

Even Elesis who had been withstanding the three's attacks without even making a groan must have felt doubtful about getting hit by Rena's arrows directly. She gave up her attack and backed off.

But they couldn't let her back off anymore. Any more would be dangerous.

"Storm in!! Go, Ara!!"

There was no chance for victory if not now. The El Search Party didn't have any chance for victory if they gave Elesis any room to recover and counter.

Right in this moment where everybody had gathered, before she blew away the building Rena was hiding in again, they had to decide this fight right now!!

"Okay!!"

Ara headed forwards without any hesitation at Add's orders. In the end, the one that had to directly clash weapons with Elesis was her, she had the most dangerous position, but she believed in Add's words and charged in towards Elesis without any doubts.

"Don't use junk break. You'll die."

Add quickly instructed Eve. With Elesis' speed, you'll get done in instantly soon as you give her any opening. No matter how powerful the attack was, attacks that left an opening were dangerous.

Eve must have also seen how Elesis fought and nodded wordlessly.

“We’ll stack things up little by little. Don’t give her any openings.”

Add spoke and let fly two chained space distortions. Elesis who was about to push back Ara’s attack made an annoyed expression as she swung her sword to nullify the distortion and backed off.

Eve realized Add’s intention and also started to fire electron balls periodically.

“Ara! Don’t use anything big!”

“Yes!”

He could read the counter skill with his eyes. Add focused so that he wouldn’t miss any of Elesis’ facial and bodily movements while firing space distortions little by little.

“Annoying....”

Elesis had realized the El Search Party’s intention and looked annoyed as she swung her sword. But the amount of small wounds on her body was increasing little by little. Blood poured out from her wrists that just got grazed by an electron ball. Tendons in her thigh got cut off after getting hit directly by a space distortion.

Of course, Elesis didn’t seem to care about the damage as she swung her sword. But Ara who had stuck close to her didn’t break down easily.

Elesis could have easily destroyed Ara under normal circumstances but Eve and Add were quickly disturbing her attacks whenever she tried to aim for an opening. And whenever she tried to get rid of Ara by just taking the hits with her body, Rena’s arrows poured in.

“Tch....”

It was little by little but Elesis was getting pushed back. Add made a satisfactory smile as he chained three space distortions in a row. Triple space distortion. It was so painful that it felt like his fingers were about to fall off but the pain was still bearable.

Elesis will fall if they kept up this pressure. Victory was right in front of their eyes!

Just when Add had confirmed his victory, the beautiful black panther opened her mouth.

Her beautiful red hair moved along with her fierce movements. A chill went through Add when his gaze met with the eyes behind the red hair. What was seeped into Elesis’ eyes was deepest darkness.

Murderous intent.

“Brutal Cutter!!”

In that instant, Elesis' sword got surrounded by an ink black demonic energy as it stretched out. A demonic blade longer than the wielder's height had appeared. Ara was startled due to her enemy's reach increasing drastically but she still managed to adjust her distance. But that opening was what Elesis was aiming for.

Elesis' feet immediately kicked the ground after lightly hitting away Ara's spear. A dash faster than an arrow. Add shouted quickly after realizing that she was coming after Eve and Add who were assisting from the back.

"Eve, watch...."

Add's tongue as he was about to speak stiffened. She hadn't dashed in towards Eve who was firing electron balls from a distance. Elesis' giant demonic blade was aiming for Add's neck.

He realized it too late. It was too fast.

Elesis didn't slow down her speed at all and was about to dash through Add's neck by swinging her blade. She held a blade so long that the tip of her sword almost touched the ground far behind her. Add finally realized how the Glitter soldiers in Feira got killed and he instinctively tried to activate the Dimension Distortion mode..... But it was too late.

Elesis was already swinging her sword.

I'm....dead.

The truth hit Add way too fast. For her to aim only at Add and rush in straightly towards him. Come to think of it, didn't she also aim for Add during the first time while riding on top of Glitter Vanguard? He should have noticed this then.

Not only that, in the enemy's point of view, it was blatantly obvious to aim for Add who was commanding the El Search Party's strategies by acting as the brain of the party. He should have been in flight... but such thoughts only lasted for a moment. He could only think that even if he was in flight, he wouldn't have been able to stop Elesis if she made a determined charge towards him.

Add thought of numerous ways as the ink black demonic sword flew in towards his neck. He couldn't think of any ways to survive.

Splassssh!!

A sword cut through human's flesh and splattered blood. Add couldn't speak after seeing the fountain of blood that gushed up in front of his eyes. It wasn't his blood.

It was Elsword's blood.

"Wha...."

Elesis also made a shocked face as her eyes opened widely. Elsword who had been watching from the back had thrown his body to block the sword that Elesis had swung aiming for Add.

“....Elsword?”

When Add called vacantly, Elsword with his back turned towards Add staggered and collapsed. A moment later, Add hastily opened the Dimension Distortion mode then examined Elsword’s condition. Wide gap ran across his waist to shoulder. You could tell it was a serious wound from all the blood that was pouring out.

No, he’ll die. Death by shock before he bled to death, he can’t survive no matter what.

“Hey! Elsword!!”

“Ah.....ugh.”

Elsword made a painful groan as he panted. Dynamo’s Dimension Distortion mode can assure certain period of safety. Add ignored the fighting noise coming from outside and quickly pulled out a potion as he pressed on Elsword’s wound.

“I, It’s fine. Big Brother....”

“What do you mean by fine?!”

You could tell with a single glance that it was a mortal wound. But Elsword stubbornly shook his head and looked across. He looked towards the scene where Ara who had caught up now and was fighting with Elesis again.

“Use it on....someone else. It’s over for me.”

“....”

Elsword’s words were saying that he knew his own condition. Add couldn’t speak a word.

Without even holding up his sword, he had taken Elesis’ attack with just his body. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that he had committed suicide.

“What were you thinking?Just what were you thinking?!”

Swears were about to come out of Add’s mouth. They had almost won this fight. It was a fight they could have won. Why did he have to jump in and get in the way?

“I’m sorry.... But I can’t understand.... cough.”

Elsword words were spaced apart as he panted. Such thin breaths as if they were going to flicker out at any moment. With blurry eyes, Elsword looked at Add who was holding him and requested.

“I don’t know why Big Sister is like that.... ah.”

“Don’t speak! You’ll die if you keep speaking!!”

Add ignored Elsword’s words as he poured the potion on him. But the bleeding didn’t show any signs of stopping. The wound was too deep.

It was amazing that he hadn’t died instantly. It was a miracle that he could even speak his last words.

“.....Please take care of the others. Big Brother Add is smart after all.”

“Hey, hey!!”

“Please take care of.... Eve.”

Elsword closed his eyes after leaving those words. Boy’s hand fell as his head dropped to the side.

Add was so dumfounded that he could only blink vacantly. This guy who was such an eyesore died? Add couldn’t believe this and tried tapping Elsword’s cheek.

There was still warmth remaining.

“.....What is... this?”

Add vacantly murmured and instinctively stood up as he released the Dimension Distortion mode. They were still in middle of a fight. He couldn’t lose his mind just yet.

“What happened to Elsword.....”

Eve came running right away and asked. But her eyes widened when she saw Elsword collapsed with his eyes closed beyond Add’s shoulder. She held Elsword recklessly and shouted.

“Elsword, get a hold of yourself! Get up!”

“....”

Eve, he’s dead. Add wanted to speak those words but the words didn’t leave his mouth. He couldn’t say anything to Eve who was letting out such a painful voice while holding Elsword.

“This can’t be! Elsword!”

“Eve.”

He barely managed to call her name but Eve didn’t look back. Add knew that she wouldn’t look back. That’s how much mournful and miserable Eve’s voice was right now.

“Open your eyes! You can’t die!”

“....Eve.”

“Aaaaaaaaah....”

Eve shook Elsword's body numerous times then she let out a scream filled with grief and despair as she dived her face into Elsword's chest. Like a child who didn't know what she should do, like a child who couldn't do anything because she was swept up by the feeling of helplessness.

Her screams, painful cry and shaking shoulders could only be interpreted as mourning.

“.....Ah”

Nothing he said would work right now. No, it won't work ever again. Add admitted this and swallowed all the words that he was about to say in that moment.

He's dead.

He can't come back.

I'll be by your side instead.

We're still in middle of a fight. Get a hold of yourself.

They were all reasonable and correct words. They were proper words. It didn't matter even if Add had always desired this kind of situation.

Truth is the truth, dead people won't come back.

No matter how precious they were to you.

“Haaa.....”

Ara was fiercely driving Elesis back. Unlike before, Elesis' reactions were tremendously slower and she had a large wound on her side. Sword that had lost its sharpness, a blunt and dead sword. She was responding to Ara's attacks but her heart wasn't there.

“Ara, come back!!”

Ara paused at Add's shout then came running towards him right away while still being on guard in front of her. She was extremely fast even when she was running backwards.

“Mr.Add, how's Mr.Elsword?”

She got called out when she was fighting well but Ara didn't care about such things and asked about Elsword. Add shook his head and requested with a tired voice.

“Eun, come out.”



“As you request, boy.”

Ara’s voice turned voluptuous instantly as if she was waiting to be called. Add felt anger, despair and almost murderous intent when Eun made a smile with her eyes but he managed to suppress everything.

“I’m going back again. Prepare for time travel.”

“Why, boy?”

“Just do as I say!!”

Eun smiled at Add’s shout but didn’t move her hands. It meant that she wouldn’t comply if Add didn’t answer.

She was like the boatman asking for a fare from someone who was trying to cross the river of death.

“Elsword.....is dead.”

“What’s the problem with that? We’ve been fighting well. We’ll be able to win very soon if we stormed her right now.”

Just like she said, Elesis wasn’t even bothering to move and was standing absent-mindedly. A sad face, disoriented stance, you couldn’t find any speck of her previous sharpness from when she was fighting at her prime.

They’ll be able to win easily if they stormed her right now.

But.....

“Aaaaaaaaah.....”

Voice of lamentation, pain and sadness coming from behind him didn’t cease.

Add closed his eyes to suppress his emotions. Appearance of Elsword as he was dying, the last words he left. No matter how much he disliked that guy, he had to fulfill his last words.

“I don’t want....to make Eve sad.”

“Merely for that reason? Doesn’t boy know very well how dangerous it is to go back in time?”

“Shut up! Shut up!”

Add clenched his fists tightly after hearing the fox’s sneer. Rage, denial and madness burned up within him when he got a sneer back from Eun while he was in a moment of despair.

“I can’t accept something like this!! I’ll win properly!! This is the now that I went through hell to achieve!! I refuse to win like this!! I’ll obtain victory flawlessly with a perfect plan!! I’ll win without losing Elsword or Rena!!

“Well, it’s a somewhat okay mindset this time.”

Eun’s hand as she smiled started to shine brightly in white. Add immediately manipulated the Dynamos to create a Time Stream wormhole.

They had almost won against the terrifyingly powerful enemy Elesis but Elsword got killed.

Restarting just for that reason? Wasn’t it good for him that such an eyesore disappeared? Shouldn’t I cheer in joy and continue?

“Don’t make me laugh.....”

Add stomped down on every one of these thoughts that came up from his mind. That’s right, this was denial. He couldn’t obtain victory this half-heartedly after getting his life saved by a mere weakling Elsword. He couldn’t accept this.

Add owed his life to Elsword two times now. He was so embarrassed to an extent where he couldn’t bear to stay alive.

Most of all, nothing could replace Eve’s sadness. Sadness and pain of having your precious person stolen from you, Add knew every single detail of how it felt and didn’t wish anyone else to go through the same thing.

He didn’t want to give Eve the pain and sadness of having her precious person torn apart from her.

“What’s why I’ll go back. I’ll go back.... go back and.....this time for sure!!”

Add glared at Elesis standing far away and declared.

“I’ll defeat you!!”

2. Sword Knight vs Dark Knight

Add blinked numbly after coming back to the past. He was inside the cafeteria. Elsword was about to chomp on a delicious looking steamed potato.

“Elsword, Rena told us to stand by at the barracks.”

“Here, you eat too.”

When Eve lectured him, Elsword grabbed one of the steamed potatoes and put in on Eve’s hand. Eve made a troublesome expression as she looked down at the bribe(?) on her head.

Ara was already eating the potatoes together with Elsword.

“It’s delicious. Would you like some Mr.Add?”

Add blankly stared at the steamed potato Ara held out towards him. He was fighting in a life threatening battle just a moment ago. Witnessing this scene right now made his mind blank out.

“Eat it by yourselves.”

“.....Will that really be alright? This is the army’s food storage.”

Hearing Add approve(?), Ara and Elsword were already grabbing their next potatoes. Eve had expected Add to stop them and was now looking confusedly at Add.

“They need to eat to fight well.”

Add responded with words that weren’t like him as he bit his lips. Time travel was successful. But... Elesis’ sword was waiting for them in the fight tomorrow.

The strongest leader of the Red Knights Elesis. She was unbelievably powerful.

It will end with the similar result if they faced her tomorrow without any plans. He could make an excuse that they got ambushed during the first time. But even during the second time where he had known she would appear, they got pushed back.

For a moment, it looked like they could win. But it only confirmed that there was no way to stop Elesis if she made up her mind to attack their back line.

“Phew.....”

“Here you go.”

When Add was letting out a helpless sigh, Eve suddenly broke her potato in half and held it out to Add. When Add couldn’t tell Eve’s intention and stared at her quietly, she spoke with a cold voice.

“Didn’t you just say yourself that you need to eat in order to fight? Nasods don’t need foods but humans are different after all.”

“....”

What she said was correct but for Eve to take care of him like this? Add was dumbstruck but took the potato for now.

Ara and Elsword were already eating their fourth potatoes. What a big appetite.

“Wow, they even have salt here. Should I enlist here too?”

“Here you go, Mr.Add. Eat it with some salt.”

Add dipped his potato lightly inside a dish of salt that Ara held out to him. He then silently chewed and swallowed the potato. Inside of his mouth heated up as the soft and sweet taste of the potato got mixed with the taste of salt and lingered on the tip of his tongue.

Eve held out a cup of water towards Add as he ate wordlessly.

“You’ll choke yourself like that.”

“.....Thanks.”

That’s right. He couldn’t do anything if he was hungry. He had to run his brain in order to think of a way to beat that powerful enemy, that black panther. Actually, the plan just now was the best he could think of..... but he couldn’t beat Elesis if he didn’t come up with something even better.

“So this is where you guys were?”

Then a familiar voice joined in. Rena entered the cafeteria and examined the group with a bitter smile. Her gaze finally turned towards Add who was chewing his potato mechanically.

“It’s my fault for coming in such haste despite knowing you guys were hungry..... But I didn’t expect Add would be like this too.”

“Humans cannot fight when they are hungry. I’d like you to give us more time, Rena.”

Eve sided with and spoke for the three who were busy eating. Rena made a strange smile as she nodded.

“Alright, I’ll be discussing our plans with Ms.Vanessa first so don’t be too late.”

“Yes, I’ll bring everyone with me after.”

Rena looked proudly at Eve as she left while smiling. Add finally finished swallowing his potato and was about to call Rena. But Eve looked at Add with a pitiful gaze then handed him another potato.

“Were you that hungry? Here.”

“.....”

He had eaten quickly so he could say his excuses to Rena. But Eve must have judged that Add ate quickly because he was hungry.

It was a gaze as if she was looking at a poor wild animal..... But Add took the potato wordlessly.

It wasn't because he was hungry. It was because it was so rare for Eve to take care of him like this. No, wasn't this the first time?

Elsword had eaten 6 potatoes meanwhile and kicked the ground as he stood up.

“Alright, I'm full now. I'll go ahead first!”

“Wait. Elsword, he's still....”

“Go with him. I'll finish eating and go with Ara.”

Eve hesitated for a moment at Add's words then nodded as she left the kitchen. Hearing her footsteps get further, Add pondered if he ever had such peaceful conversation with Eve before.

“It's enjoyable to see such harmonious moments.”

Eun answered Add's internal question for him. Ara's hair had already turned white and fox ears were twitching on top of her head.

Add stared quietly at the unwarranted entity Eun who had come out.

“You're not showing an unpleasant reaction anymore, boy. Should I interpret this as you feeling slightly more goodwill towards me now?”

“This time....how can I win this time?”

Eun must already know what will happen tomorrow. Shadow Master could be beaten if the entire El Search Party fought it together.

But how can they beat Elesis? Was there even a way to conquer that terrifying monster?

Eun sat on the chair with her legs crossed and didn't answer as she just wagged her tails. She was leisurely grabbing the potatoes one by one and stroking them as if she was checking for their quality.

Add would have been normally become unpleasant and enraged at Eun's guile attitude right now. But he just stared quietly right now. Eun smiled with her eyes. It seemed Eun hadn't expected this kind of reaction from Add.

“Huhu, boy seems reserved today. No. Is saying ‘today’ strange after all? Saying ‘this moment’ should be the more correct way for talking with the boy.”

“Tell me how.”

“There could be a way, or there could be none.”

Add closed his mouth at the riddle like response. If the conversation went on like this, the one who’ll get the initiative will be Eun.

But Add didn’t quibble over this fact unlike before. There was something he had to bring into question before that.

“.....Just what do you want from me? It’s probably not making me randomly time travel endlessly. You wouldn’t have helped with defeating Shadow Master if that was your intention.”

“What do you mean?”

“Eve would have kept being destroyed if you didn’t tell me how to defeat Shadow Master. I would have been repeatedly rewinding that time.”

Add suddenly realized as he spoke.

He would rewind time only when Eve was destroyed. Add was acting according to this decision so far. And this decision didn’t change until he actually witnessed Rena and Elsword’s deaths.

“Could it be that.....”

“Stop! Do not speak if you are going to suspect that I had already seen everything that was going to happen. That I knew boy will change his mind. As I’ve said before, I’m not omnipotent or omniscient.”

“.....”

Add shut his mouth just as he was about to ask Eun if she had known that Add would turn back time even if Eve wasn’t destroyed and another party member was killed instead.

Eun was lightly scratching her head with a tried face.

“It would be obvious for boy to suspect as such in his position. And I didn’t intervene in various ways because I was afraid of getting that same suspicion. But the only thing I know about at this point is the enemy waiting for us tomorrow. Even I do not know how that enemy would act, or what kind of result will be waiting.”

“Even you can’t take her on?”

Could it be that even Eun coming out to the surface completely wouldn’t be enough to beat Elesis?

Add made a very surprised expression as he inferred this conclusion from Eun's words.

No, no matter how strong Elesis was, wasn't she within the realms of humans? Even the Great Specter Eun cannot defeat her?

"Did you just dare to call me a Great Specter?"

"...."

Although Add hadn't said it out loud, Eun shook her head as if she was honestly displeased.

"I didn't read your thoughts. I pointed it out because your attitude was clearly evident. Geez, hearing such words even though I've helped...."

"...Just continue with what you were saying."

Add was embarrassed that his thoughts got found out and spoke bluntly. For some reason, Eun was rather cooperative right now. He needed to use this chance to get information.

"I'm currently sealed away right now. Also, Ara's body won't be able to hold out if I fought seriously."

Eun said those words as she curled up her right hand to make a claw like shape then waved it in midair. Then a human sized claw marks got carved into a stone wall far way. It was an amazingly powerful attack.

Normal people would have died even before they figured out how they got killed.

"...I see."

But they couldn't be assured of victory against Elesis even if this much powerful Eun helped.

Then how about avoiding this battle? Turning back time to before they headed to Velder and telling the party to go somewhere else....

"No. I guess it won't work."

"That's correct. After converting the El inside the royal castle into a Dark El, Demons will be able to use the Dimension Gate freely again. If that happens, they will send assassins after Eve again. If you avoid facing Elesis now, you'll end up having to face Elesis plus the thousands of Demons next time."

Even darker future waited for them if they ran away.

"Just what is that woman's goal? How come a woman who was the strongest amongst the humans joined up with the Demons?"

“That’s not something important. Elly is like a sword when she makes up her decision. She probably won’t forgive any enemies that stand in her way.”

Add didn’t like Eun’s attitude as if she was talking like this was someone else’s business. Then Add realized that it was obvious. No matter how much Add suffered and struggled, it was his problem. It didn’t matter at all to Eun.

All she had to do was take over Ara’s body and run away if things got dicey.

“.....I don’t understand what kind of evil spirit boy sees me as.”

Add didn’t answer even though Eun spoke with a tone as if she was hurt. How Eun had read his thoughts right now wasn’t important. It probably must have shown on his face or something.

When Add didn’t remove his suspicions, Eun sighed and got up from her seat. She approached Add with a pouting face that was unlike her, and then abruptly held out her hand.

Grab.

Eun pinched Add’s cheek and spoke sharply.

“Isn’t that a bit harsh boy? Did you think me, who’s been journeying together with all of you all this time, would abandon boy and the others so ruthlessly, without any regrets, and run away?”

“That’s because you said.....”

“That’s just something I said because boy made me angry. How can you be so dense about a girl’s heart? Do I really have to say this out loud?”

Eun expressed her irritation as she twisted Add’s cheek painfully. Add felt like screaming but held on with willpower as he spoke each words precisely.

“Then tell me what I have to do to win.”

“Shouldn’t there be an appropriate procedure if you are going to make a request to me?”

“.....”

Eun let go of Add’s cheek for now but it didn’t look like she had relieved her anger. Add rubbed his cheek as he looked at Eun glare at him with her arms crossed.

“If you help me this time, then I’ll time travel once according to your request.”

His shin got kicked. All he did was give a reasonable bargain but he got violence in return. Add groaned as he grabbed his leg and hopped in place in pain.

Eun looked at Add while he was hopping in pain and spoke coldly.

“.....Even if you don’t know about a human’s heart, you should at least know about a girl’s heart.”

What was she saying when he had gone out of his way to present her with a fair bargain? Add looked at Eun while suppressing his pain, but all he got back was a cold stare.

“.....If it’s about that time, I’m sorry.”

“What time do you mean? Boy has been going back and forth in time so much that I cannot remember clearly.”

Add made a light sigh at Eun’s snort and apologized.

“About how I treated you as an object in somebody’s pocket.....”

“Now you seem to understand human words. How can you be denser than me, a fox? And also, did you think I’ll feel better now that you’ve bowed in apology to me?”

Eun was shooting back as if she was waiting for this opportunity. Before, she had always been leisurely and teased him with a tone as if she was looking down on him. But she was quite straightforward when she actually started to reveal her emotions.

Although she hadn’t shown any signs, she must have been extremely offended that time.

“I said I’m sorry....”

“That’s not a tone of someone who is sorry. I can see clearly that you’re speaking reluctantly.”

Eun words were cold but she soon let out a sigh and dropped down to sit on the table. It seems her mood had loosened slightly after pouring out her emotions.

“Well, I somewhat understand boy’s position as well. I would look quite suspicious. Is she trying to toy around with my fate? Is she doing this because she has some ulterior motive? Well, they are obvious thoughts to make.”

“.....”

Eun’s tone was as if she was used to these suspicions. Eun shook her feet lightly in midair then waved her hand and changed the topic.

“But I at least wholeheartedly agree with the boy’s great cause of wanting win against Elly in a fight tomorrow without anyone’s death. Do you understand?”

“Then the way to win?”

Didn’t she say that it won’t work even if Eun fought? Eun paused when Add insisted.

“Before I say, promise me one thing. That you won’t suspect me again.”

“That’s....”

“I can tell by your face. Don’t answer half-heartedly just so you can avoid this situation. Say no if you don’t want to.”

Eun requested with a clear cut tone. It seemed she had been quite begrudged by that past event.....but Add shook his head.

“Don’t make such unreasonable demands.”

“.....That sounds contradictory to how you were begging me just now. Shouldn’t boy have to lick my feet right now if I wanted him to?”

Eun’s eyes narrowed and her voice turned low.

She looked very emotional and even dangerous. But Add coldly glared at Eun.

“Stop making unreasonable demands, fox. You won’t reveal your intentions, won’t give me any information but you expect me to blatantly trust you? Do you think that makes sense? Didn’t you say it yourself that it was obvious for me to be suspicious?”

“....”

“Show some sincerity if you want to earn my trust. If you won’t show any sincerity, then give up my trust. Isn’t that very simple?”

Eun was wordless and had her eyes opened narrowly. It was an ambiguous attitude where you couldn’t tell if she didn’t want to speak anymore or if she’ll listen to more.

Add haughtily looked up and concluded.

“But if I can win tomorrow by listening to you..... Then I’ll trust you a bit.”

“.....”

“Be thankful.”

When Add threw his words bluntly, Eun looked like she was at a loss for words as she put her hand on her forehead and let out a long sigh. She almost looked like a cat that just saw mouse acting cute in front of its eyes.

But Add didn’t change his attitude.

Well, he understood that Eun had been very hurt by that one time. Her attitude just now was probably her true feelings and not an act.

But that and this were separate things.

“.....Fine, boy’s words are logical. But what are you going to do if I get more offended by this and refuse to help?”

“You won’t. You must have wanted this.”

“I....”

“Even if you hadn’t known everything, you must have wanted this time to come.”

Add spoke coldly as he glared at Eun.

He could deduce from the traces of their past conversations. Add had determined to not rewind time unless Eve was destroyed and Eun asked multiple times if he was really sure about that.

She must have said those words knowing that there will be a casualty other than Eve when they fought with Elesis tomorrow. Well, although if you believed Eun’s words asking him to not suspect her.... she wouldn’t have known in every detail.

Achieving victory against such a powerful enemy like Elesis without any casualties was almost impossible. Even if she didn’t look into the future, Eun could have easily known that the El Search Party would get destroyed if Elesis attacked them.

Eun was cleverly justifying her position. Add concluded this much but didn’t ask any further.

“I turned back time again when Rena and Elsword died. This must be one of the results you wanted right?”

“.....I won’t say that it’s not.”

“The moment you’ve wanted is right here. So cooperate.”

It was Add who should have been begging in this situation but Add examined the situation carefully and didn’t let go of his initiative. Just like how Eun had shown Add the scene of Eve getting destroyed many times before telling Add the solution, Eun had been trying to do the same thing here.

Thus, Eun had also wanted the situation of Add acting like this, the situation of Add making up his mind to win against Elesis without death of any party members.

He didn’t need to show any signs of weakness when their goals were aligned. When Add quickly made his conclusion and looked at Eun haughtily, Eun let out a thin sigh.

“I don’t know where I let up this time. Boy is too smart that it’s sometimes difficult to deal with him.”

“Kukukuk, you don’t have to pay any lip service.”

Add let out a cold laugh then held out his hand towards Eun. Eun who was sitting down looked up at him. Add pressed for an answer.

“Don’t just sit there, get up and tell me what I should do. I’ll do exactly as you say.”

“There is a best possible way..... But I don’t know if boy can pull it off.”

“I’ve come this far, there’s nothing I can’t pull off.”

There can’t be anything worse than cross-dressing right? When Add snorted, Eun smiled bitterly as she grabbed Add’s hand.

“Even if you act so confidently, something even more hideous is waiting.”

And it was just as she said.

The strategy meeting was already in progress when Add entered the Velder’s Liberation army’s commander’s tent. But the goal they were trying to achieve was something outrageous so it was a situation where no one could come up with any proper suggestions.

Add didn’t bother to sit and glanced at the map once then made his conclusion.

“What a ridiculous plan. Retreat before you get annihilated.”

“.....”

When Vanessa frowned, Rena quickly spoke in Vanessa’s place.

“Wait Add, listen to me for a moment. We can’t just retreat....”

“Yes, you can’t retreat because of the citizens and the king. But no matter how important the goal is, you should know when to retreat when you are outmatched. We’ll get annihilated if we engage blindly.”

Add’s sharp words cut across the atmosphere of the meeting. Everyone had been giving various opinions but this meeting was more like an armchair meeting. Vanessa’s adjutants that hadn’t been here last time were frowning as they stared at Add.

But Add sneered on purpose to show them.

“You’re going to face the elite demon army with theses scraped together forces that’s barely managing to hold themselves together? Are you misunderstanding that your battle capabilities went up amazingly because we are here? What an attitude to show when you don’t even have any courage to fight without borrowing someone else’s strength.”

“How.....”

It was a blatant mockery. Even if the El Search Party were important reinforcements that came in their hour of need, it was hard to suppress their rage after getting mocked so openly like this. Just when one of the knights was about to stamp up from their seat, Vanessa quickly grabbed the knights' arm and put him back in his seat.

In this tense atmosphere, Add withdrew his sneer then threw sharp words across the meeting.

"Bring some reinforcements if you really want to go through with this plan. I heard this on the way here but didn't you have something like the Red Knights? Soldiers were all praising them that this tragedy wouldn't have happened if the Red Knights were here. Why don't you call them?"

"Red Knights are now....."

"Now what? Where are those Knights that are supposed to be the strongest in the kingdom?"

Just when Vanessa was about to murmur with a troubled voice, Elsword got up from his seat and left. While everyone blinked in surprise seeing that he left without saying anything, Eve also quickly stood up and left as she followed after Elsword.

Just when Knights that were startled by the repeated walkouts were about to raise their voice, Add lightly hit down on the table.

"The meeting ends here. I'll come up with the plan so be prepared to fight. Battle will start soon even if we don't want to."

"Pardon me?"

"What?"

Rena and Vanessa, and everyone else looked at Add with a surprised expression. Wasn't what Add said right now 180 degrees different from what he was saying before?

But Add who had completely changed his attitude didn't explain anymore and instructed Rena.

"Rena, help encourage the soldiers with Vanessa. They won't be able to fight as they are right now."

"Alright."

Rena looked like she wanted to ask many questions but was holding back for now. Did she notice that this was something they couldn't talk about in front of other people including Vanessa?

"Then I'll go get some fresh air."

Of course, that was a lie.

Add exited the tent but he didn't get on the Dynamos and walked instead. He didn't want to hurry.

Elsword was sitting on the same box from the previous time. If there was something that had changed, it was that Eve was also beside him now.

Elsword had his head dropped down and Eve was beside him holding his hand. Seeing Eve's hand on top of the back of Elsword's hand..... It felt unpleasant.

“Kukukuk.”

Well, wouldn't such feelings be beneficial now? Add did his best to suppress his displeasure, rage and all sorts of negative emotions as he approached the two. Eve turned around after hearing Add's footsteps then tried to say something to prevent him from talking. But Add didn't give any eye to her.

Target of his sight was Elsword's limp back.

“I found Elesis.”

“.....”

Elsword's back winced then he slowly turned his gaze towards Add. His shadowed eyes contained a question asking how he knew.

Add made an exaggerated shrug then continued his words.

“I'm going to talk with Elsword now. Are you planning to listen in?”

“.....So that was on purpose.”

Eve's face turned extremely unpleasant. She just realized that Add had purposely brought up the topic of Red Knights in front of Elsword in order to provoke him.

Her stare was filled with rage as if she was asking Add if he was doing this purposely to hurt Elsword.

But Add didn't give even a single glance at Eve. It was because he was afraid that he wouldn't have the courage to continue talking if he saw what face Eve was making right now.

Add sneered as he asked Elsword again.

“Do you want to know?”

“.....”

Elsword let out a sigh as he pulled his hand out of Eve's hand then stood up to face Add.

Elsword had a troubled expression as he spoke with a low voice.

“Please tell me where Big Sister is.”

“She joined up with the demons that captured Velder. She’s cooperating with them. She’s our enemy now.”

“.....”

Elsword’s face stiffened. Add looked up towards the sky as he spoke with an exaggerated voice.

Alright, let’s paint over time.

“Would it be more correct to say that she’s now an enemy of the entire human race?”

“You.....”

Eve’s disgusted voice caused a ripple of pain to go through Add’s heart. Add looked down to stare at Elsword. Elsword had his eyes opened widely and was biting his lower lip. The shock must have been quite large.

“There’s no way Big Sister would.....”

Elsword’s words as he tried to refute stopped. Hand that Add held out towards him. A long red hair was on top of his hand.

Elsword couldn’t continue his words after seeing the hair with an extremely similar color as his own. The hair Add had picked up in Feira, something he had kept just in case was now giving extra persuasive power to Add’s words.

“You still can’t believe after seeing this? Then you can just confirm it with your own eyes tomorrow. But before that, I want to hear your opinion. What are you going to do now? Your sister is on the demons’ side. Are you going to join them too?”

“Stop this, Add. I won’t forgive you if you say anymore.”

Add didn’t stop despite Eve’s warning.

He wouldn’t have started this in the first place if he was going to stop here. He wouldn’t have traveled back in time if he wasn’t going to say this.

“You must be doubtful; you probably don’t want to trust what I said. But what are you going to do if it’s true?”

“.....”

“Elsword, I asked what are you going to do if your Big Sister who had gone missing for half a year actually joined up with the demons.”

When Add pressed for an answer, Elsword continued to bite his lower lip and couldn’t say anything.

His heart must be in a mess. The gladness from the sudden news about his missing family and the impulse of denial must be getting mixed up from within him.

“Add, I told you to stop.”

“I don’t want to.”

Add finally averted his gaze from Elsword and looked at Eve. He pretty much finished what he had to say to Elsword.

Eve was staring at Add with a gaze that was cold beyond measure. Eve’s attitude towards Add before had been stiff and distanced. But now, she was showing an expression of loathing, contempt and rage towards him.

Insisting that she doesn’t have any emotions despite this.....? Isn’t this unfair?

Add let out a sigh then looked at Eve with narrow eyes.

“What are you going to do by keep doting on him like this?”

“Who is.....?”

“Enough is enough. Do you think I’m doing this for no reason? Elesis is already our enemy. You can confirm it for yourself tomorrow if you’re doubtful. But what are you going to do if it’s true?

“.....”

Eve couldn’t respond. Add sharply pushed the issue.

“His older sister he’s been looking for joined up with the demons that are trying to destroy this kingdom. What is he going to do now? Shouldn’t he know beforehand so he can make his choice?”

“.....What choice do you mean?”

Eve was barely managing to respond. Add waved his hand as a gesture of saying don’t say something so obvious.

“Choice if he will follow his sister and surrender himself to the demons or not.... I’m saying that if he’s going to betray us, let’s get it over with neatly. Since he was an El Search Party member, we’ll also get suspected if he joined the demons....”

Slap!!! Add’s body staggered after getting hit by Eve’s palm that tore through the wind and came flying towards his cheek. The impact was so powerful that the strength in Add’s back almost gave out, but he held on with willpower and didn’t let himself fall.

Eve was now glaring at Add as if she was looking at an enemy.

“So.... This is how it’s going to be is it?”

Add lamented after seeing Eve’s hostile gaze. He didn’t do this so it could turn out like this. But could only turn out like this.

Eve ignored Add lamenting and glared coldly.

“I won’t stand by quietly if you say anything more.”

“Really? What are you going to do? Are you going to kill me?”

“.....”

He had gotten slapped by Eve many times before. But he had never felt this much disgusted from it. Add sneered as he laughed with a feeling of not knowing who he was laughing at.

“Or what? Are you going to follow Elsword wherever he goes? If he joins the demons, are you going to go together with him?”

“I don’t even want to deal with you anymore. Let’s go, Elsword.”

“I asked you a question Elsword. Answer.”

Add suppressed the shout that was about to burst out from his throat and instead asked calmly as possible. Eve grabbed Elsword’s hand again as if she didn’t want to deal with such nonsense. Elsword, who had been looking down towards the ground the entire time was now about to move his steps and follow Eve who was pulling him.

It was a hateful sight.

“You hide behind your sister when you are young and now you are going to hide behind Eve like a coward?”

“....”

Elsword’s steps stopped.

“I see, you’re still a brat inside despite how your body grew and your skills got improved. It was stupid of me have tried changing my opinion of you even for a little bit. You were just a useless brat. I wasted my time.”

“If Big Sister.....”

A raspy voice, Elsword didn’t know what to do with his surging emotions.

“If Big Sister really joined hands the demons, I.....”

Elsword clenched his fists and couldn't continue his words. Boy only shook in place for a while then kicked the ground as he dashed off by himself.

Eve obviously tried to follow him right away but Add used three of the Dynamos to block her path. Add sneered when Eve sharply turned her head around to glare at him.

"Kukuk, just leave him alone to think by himself. He should have lots to worry about."

"....."

Eve was about to use her gears to hit the Dynamos away but stopped for some reason. She looked like she was collecting her thoughts then spoke with a low voice.

"Add, I think I understand why you did this."

"Hoh? Really?"

Add was quite surprised at Eve's tone that was as if she had put aside all the emotions she was showing before.

He had thought she'd be in haste to follow Elsword. Her talking to him like this right now was quite unexpected.

"If Elesis is really our enemy then it's correct to tell Elsword. But I cannot agree with this method of yours."

"I didn't do this expecting someone to agree."

"I cannot forgive you for this."

What Eve showed after putting aside her emotions was a plain hostility and animosity. It was a gaze as if she was looking at an enemy she had to destroy.

Add's heart hurt as if it was getting stabbed but he suppressed his emotions.

"Whichever side has to, I hope we don't ever see each other's face again after this mission."

"....."

It was an extremely explicit demand. Did it mean that if you won't leave then we will?

"Also, although Elsword is shaken right now, he won't collapse. I assure you."

"Kukukuk."

Eve didn't respond to Add's laugh and slowly walked away by avoiding the Dynamos.

She walked off towards the direction Elsword ran off. Was she trying to find him and stay beside him? Was she trying to stay beside Elsword to protect and comfort him all night while he's caught up in pain and worry? Would she say to him that Add was lying? Or would she say that Add is just a jerk?

What will those two talk about through the night?

“.....”

Add's smile stopped. What showed up on his face was rage and helplessness. What remained in his heart was self-loathing.

“Hahaha.”

He tried laughing to get rid of this lump in his heart but it didn't show any signs of disappearing.

Originally in this time..... This would have been a scene where Add recognized Elsword's feelings towards Elesis and comforted him. This would have gotten found out by the other party members and Add would have gotten warm evaluations from the other party members. Didn't Eve also react as if she had changed her opinion of Add?

But it got painted over.

Add rudely tore out Elsword's heart and Eve opposed Add's actions. No, it didn't end with just opposition. She declared that they were strangers soon as this mission was over.

“Kukukukuk.”

It was unsightly, although he didn't know what it was that was exactly unsightly.

Night, private tent.

Add sat on the chair as he stared quietly at the steaming potato. He even prepared a dish of salt beside it. Add was staring at the potato for a while then made his decision and started to peel the potato.

He dipped the potato in salt and tasted it. It was tasty. But Add didn't feel like eating anymore after swallowing his first bite.

“It tastes different.....”

A sudden rage swept over Add as he was looking down at the potato. Then he swung his arm to throw the potato away. He couldn't withstand after recalling Eve's face filled with only hostility towards him.

Then the potato that was flying towards the tent entrance stopped in midair as if it was caught by something. Defiance of gravity? When Add was looking at the potato confusedly.....a voice came from outside the tent.

"You shouldn't mistreat food."

Eun entered the tent and grabbed the potato in the air as if she was picking a fruit then tastily took a bite out of it. Looking at Eun enjoyably eating the potato, Add covered his face with his palm and waved his hand.

"Go to the cafeteria if you want something to eat."

"Do you think I came to meet the boy because I needed something to eat?"

She ate deliciously despite what she said. Eun quickly finished the potato then tried to sit on the table with the strategy map on top but stopped to make a puzzled expression.

"There's no plan."

"There's no point unless we beat Elesis."

Velder Liberation Army already had inferior numbers. Even without that disadvantage.... It didn't feel like numbers mattered to Elesis. She can easily blow away buildings by gathering then firing demonic energy. Would normal soldiers be able to even approach her?

This wasn't a fight between the Velder Liberation army and the demon army. It was a fight between the El Search Party and Elesis. Victory was impossible for the Velder Liberation army if the El Search Party couldn't defeat Elesis.

"So, I told Elsword beforehand just like you said. Will everything be fine now?"

"Even I don't know that, boy."

Eun shook her head at Add's blunt question. Her attitude was as if she honestly didn't know.

"I only told you the best possible way. I can't guarantee that it will work out well."

"....."

Someone here had executed her instructions while suppressing their emotions and this is her answer? But Add knew that he couldn't blame Eun.

That's how much beyond reason the opponent called Elesis was.

“We couldn’t fight with a burden anyways. It was correct to tell him.”

Elsword was so shocked after knowing that Elesis was their opponent that he couldn’t even think about holding up his sword. He’ll only get in the way in such a state. Of course, Add was only alive right now because that Elsword had thrown his body.....

But that was that, and this was this. The result might have changed if Elsword had made up his mind to fight.

“I’ll turn time back again if we fail. It will work out somehow.”

“I wouldn’t recommend it too much.....What are you planning to do after that?”

Unexpectedly, Eun’s tone was as if she was trying to dissuade him. So what were they going to do if they still couldn’t defeat Elesis even after telling Elsword the truth beforehand? There was something that Add had in mind.

“We’ll go back in time further and bring Raven. That will work.”

If they couldn’t win because they didn’t have enough forces, then they just had to supplement it. Add had never met Raven again ever after the time when Raven separated in Ruben. He never had the chance to confirm why he wasn’t joining up from Rena. But he had to bring in Raven now no matter what.

Raven was a skilled individual comparable to Rena. With him, they had a chance of victory against Elesis. It felt like a convincing plan for Add, but Eun shook her head.

“That’s impossible.”

“What?”

“Master of blades is already fighting in a different battlefield. It’s impossible for him to join up.”

Add could tell that this strange title was referring to Raven. But he still couldn’t understand what Eun said.

“What do you mean? Didn’t he split up so he could research what Banthus did with the Nasods in Ruben?”

“That’s only the surface excuse. It’s actually different. He won’t be rejoining.”

“.....”

Hearing this abrupt information, Add pressed his forehead with his hand and dived into his thoughts. Certainly, he had time traveled multiple times but he had never seen any hint of Raven.

Add had been passing this off as something trivial.... But there was a hidden circumstance behind it?

“Are you telling me that he won’t rejoin even if I convince him that Rena will be in danger?”

“He’ll be extremely tormented by it, extremely....”

Eun’s bitter words meant that he wouldn’t rejoin. Add exploded in anger at this miscalculation and kicked the chair.

Empty chair made an unpleasant sound as it dragged across the floor.

“It looks like you know more about this.”

“He’s a famously skilled individual in Elrios. He can’t help but to be occupied when demons are invading all over the place.”

“I don’t think that should a reason for him to not rejoin when Rena he had been traveling with is in danger.”

Eun didn’t answer Add’s question. Add sighed knowing that this meant she won’t talk about this anymore. The circumstances didn’t matter.

Important thing here was that the method of going way back in time to have Raven rejoin got blocked.

“Then..... Is there no other way?”

“I wonder if there is...”

Add let out an empty laugh at Eun’s unconfident response. This was the first time he’s seen this sly fox acting so weak. Just like she said, it really did seem like she wasn’t all powerful.

He had to even withstand Eve’s cold stare as he painted over time. But they still didn’t have any guarantee at victory?

When Add sighed, Eun moved her tail to wag it in front of Add’s face. Add got annoyed at this distracting movement and pushed the tail away with his hand. But then, another tail moved in.

There were 9 of Eun’s fox tails and only two of Add’s arms. It was obvious who would win.

In the end, Add got buried in Eun’s tails. It tickled so much and he couldn’t stand it.

“.....Get these off me.”

“Well, aren’t they very soft that it feels uplifting?”

They were indeed soft but Add didn’t feel good. To be accurate, he didn’t feel like joking around right now. When Add got angry and tried to move the tails again, Eun spoke with a calm voice.

“Don’t get anxious, boy. I understand that you were hurt by girl’s words. But boy has more time than the others. This can be redeemed if you use that time right.”

“Who said I was hurt?”

There was a rage mixed in with Add’s voice. Eun let out a thin sigh as she slightly lowered her head.

“I do feel sorry about today.”

“.....”

“I let boy do something despicable. I should have spoken those words myself after all.”

“It’s not something I should get comforted over.”

Eun told Add that they should tell Elsword the truth about how Elesis was their enemy. Eun said it didn’t matter if she borrowed Ara’s body to speak those words to Elsword instead of Add. But Add refused and chose to say those words himself.

“I chose to do it.”

Eve wouldn’t have become hostile to Add if Eun had spoken those words instead of Add. That was certain..... But Add couldn’t accept that.

It was annoying and enraging, but Add didn’t want to remain an observer hiding behind someone’s back.

“Eve never thought good of me from the start anyways. All that happened was returning to point zero. Kukukuk.”

It felt like a certain emotion he had built up till now, a feeling that he couldn’t quite describe got set back to point zero, no, went backwards into the negatives, but Add didn’t care.

No, Add tried not to care. If he got caught up in something so trivial, he would lose something that’s truly important.

Eve, Rena and Elsword, he’ll win against Elesis without having anyone else die. He could swallow any kind of hostile stares from Eve for the sake of achieving that result.

“There was nothing from the start anyways.....”

Add suppressed his own emotions and murmured with a tone as if he was comforting himself. Then he felt his chin getting tickled again. Add thought that this was Eun’s tail again and tried to push it away without any thought. But what got caught in Add’s hand was a hand.

Eun had lowered her upper body and was tickling Add’s chin as if to soothe him.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

“I was comforting the boy.”

Even if he tried to move her hand away, he couldn't win in physical strength. When Add frowned, Eun who had lowered her upper body and placed both of her hands on top of the table subtly lowered her voice.

“I would like to comfort the wounded boy with the ways of the fox.”

“....”

Voluptuous ringing voice that any guy would fall for. But Add instinctively raised his guard. He didn't know what might be done to him if he became this fox's plaything....

“Big Brother Add, are you in there?”

Then a question suddenly came from outside and someone entered the tent without waiting for a response. Person that came in looked straightly at Add sitting on the chair and Eun sitting on the table tickling Add's chin..... He asked seriously.

“Should I come later?”

“....Don't go, it's a misunderstanding.”

He was glad that Elsword didn't misunderstand like Eve. Only in this moment, Add was thankful that Elsword was more mature despite his age.

Eun took her hand off Add's chin and made a beaming smile towards Elsword.

Elsword tilted his head then asked.

“Are you really Big Sister Ara?”

“Because walking while bathing in the night breeze felt soothing. Not only that, isn't the moon very bright today?”

“Ah, I guess, the moon was really bright.”

Add was at a loss for words when Elsword conversed with Eun without any suspicions. You could tell with a single glance the difference in Eun and Ara's atmosphere. But Elsword didn't suspect anything. Well, you wouldn't normally think that a Celestial Fox spirit was possessing Ara's body.

“Big Sister Ara, would you give Big Brother Add and me a moment?”

When Elsword spoke maturely, Eun smiled glamorously as she got up from the table.

“Then I'll come back after the talk is over, boy.”

“Don’t come.”

Eun left while laughing without a sound at Add’s hateful response. Only two people, Elsword and Add remained in Add’s private tent now. Add realized this fact a moment later and felt unpleasant.

Should I have told her to stay?

Add rested his chin below his hands and glared at Elsword. Elsword collected his breath then asked with a stiff expression. It looked like he had been through a lot of difficulty in coming to meet with Add in private.

“Is it true that Big Sister is working together with the demons that have captured Velder?”

“Why did you come by yourself?”

Add answered Elsword’s question with a question of his own. Add was curious. Shouldn’t Eve be sticking beside and comforting Elsword right now? Even if that wasn’t the case, Eve would have without a doubt tried to come with Elsword if he was coming to meet with Add.

Since Eve cares deeply about everything that has to do with Elsword.

‘Thinking about it doesn’t feel too good.’

While Add was frowning, Elsword answered earnestly.

“Like you said. I didn’t want to hide behind Eve.”

“.....”

“So please answer me. Did Big Sister really....really join the demons? Why?”

Add gave up responding with personal emotions after hearing Elsword’s desperate voice. Elsword was currently acting with the heart of wanting to get back the person most precious to him.

Let’s respond sincerely.

“I don’t know the reason myself. But Elesis has indeed currently joined hands with the demons and she will block our path tomorrow. Actually, I’m the one who’d like to ask you why she’d do such a thing.....”

“.....”

Add examined to see if he could get any information but there was nothing he could find out from Elsword’s cloudy face.

Didn’t they say she was the leader of the kingdom’s strongest Red Knights? Rising to such a position as a girl probably meant that she possessed enormous skills and people’s opinion of her must have been outstanding.

She was the enemy but Add honestly had no choice but to respect Elesis. Although her skills were clearly superior, she took the initiative by ambushing, all the while being calm and overflowing with composure.

There was no wavering in her movements even though she was against her family.

Although, judging by how after she unexpectedly slew Elsword....her movements became very distressed, it didn't seem like she was totally a mechanical person. Add wondered for a moment if he should tie Elsword up and tried negotiating with her, but he quickly felt that it was futile.

Even if they took Elsword hostage, wouldn't she just jump in and slash all the other party members down then release Elsword?

It was a ridiculous story, but it was totally possible with Elesis' skills.

"Hostage negotiation would be futile...."

"What?"

"I was talking to myself, don't mind it."

Add rested his chin on his hands then looked at Elsword's face sideways. Elsword looked distressed as he let his words trail as if he was groaning.

"I don't know why. Big Sister..... Everyone said Big Sister was strong and she was actually really strong. I was no match for her. That's why I always wanted to become stronger than her, and on the other hand..... I was really proud of my big sister who was stronger than me, who was stronger than anyone else."

"....."

"She was so bright that just looking at her was blinding."

Add didn't sigh at Elsword's gloomy words.

Those were words about his memories. Add wasn't too interested....but Add having to listen this was better than Elsword telling this to Eve. On the other hand, each word Elsword spoke oozed out how precious Elesis was to him and how much he loved Elesis. Add didn't want to interfere.

No matter who it is, you don't interfere with these kinds of things.

"That's why I wanted to become stronger. I wanted to fight side by side with Big Sister. But.... If Big Sister is on the demons' side, what am I supposed to do?"

"If you want list of options, I'll give them to you. First, run away from here. You didn't hear anything or know anything."

Elsword immediately shook his head to refuse. He finally encountered news about Elesis. He couldn't run away despite knowing this. Not only that, righteous Elsword would never run away leaving the other Search Party members behind.

.....If it was Eve, wouldn't she go with her? Add cut off the thought as it rose up from within him then presented Elsword with the next option.

"Second, surrender yourself to the demon army. Then you'll be able to fight side by side with Elesis just as you wished. You probably would be in good standing in there if you became her subordinate. She did seem like she held a rather important position in their army."

Judging by how she could command a Glitter Vanguard freely or how the demons left her alone to run amok as a solitary unit, the demon army must trust her quite a bit. Well, with that much skill, she probably has more value as a fighting force if they left her alone to run around freely by herself.And you also had to wonder if there was even anyone amongst the demons that could suppress her.

She was the worst possible enemy for Elrios, but would the demons be able to blatantly trust D's knight? They wouldn't be able to trust her since someone who had betrayed once before could betray again.

Just when Add was dwelling in his thoughts, Elsword who had kept a numb expression until now burst out in anger.

".....Are you telling me, a Velder Kingdom's knight to join the demons? Those guys are disturbing Elrios!"

"Don't say something that everyone already knows. I'm telling you to join Elesis not the demons. She's just siding with the demons. And I'm not sure but I don't think her position in the demon army as a human would be too good. Don't you think so? You being beside her could be quite a help to her."

Elsword's face got swept up in disarray at Add's words. Add smiled as he added.

"I won't blame you even if you make this choice. Do what you would like."

".....Do you really want me to?"

Add shook his head bitterly at Elsword's words which contained a suspicion and rage as if he was asking Add if he was coaxing him into betraying.

"Didn't I say it before? Ignore what anyone else says if it's a path you chose in order to be with the person precious to you. Why do you care if the demons destroy Elrios? Isn't being beside Elesis all that matters to you?"

"....."

Elsword clenched his fists and painfully bit his lower lip. A conflicted face, he probably can't choose anything after being faced with his own set of values and the truth that Elesis has joined the demons.

"If you don't want to choose either of them, then here's the final third choice. Someone told me that there are always three choices."

It's what that damned fox told him. Add smiled coldly as he clenched his fist tightly then stretched it out in front of his face.

"Fight Elesis and win, then bring her to our side."

"What?"

"You can do whatever you want when you win. If you don't want to go join her, then win and bring her into the El Search Party."

"....."

Elsword only blinked vacantly for a while. Then after a long pause, he finally must have understood what Add meant and spoke with a dumbstruck tone.

"Nonsense, if Big Sister ever decides on something once, she won't listen to what I..."

"That's why you beat her down. Nothing beats a good whipping."

When Add spoke about this ancient truth that has been passed down through generations, Elsword stared at Add with an appalled gaze as if he was asking how such a heinous and blasphemous thought can exist.

For Elsword, Elesis was.... the absolute value. He was like the sunflower looking up at the sun. He must have only looked at her and never had dreamed of standing in the same place as her.

No. Standing in the same place was the boy's dream.

Add had devalued Elsword on the outside, but he internally admitted Elsword's skills. He had already saved Add's life two times, and even without that, his sword skills and battlefield judgement was top notch. Considering his age, he will become stronger and stronger from now on.

The talk about how he would become stronger than Add after 1 year, those words couldn't be blindly discarded as nonsense.

"Aren't you the youngest knight ever in the Velder Kingdom?"

It was more than enough for Elsword to be proud of his own skills. But Elsword had never shown any signs of this. For example, during the previous timeline where Add wanted to make a bet about who could defeat more Glitter soldiers, didn't Elsword answer that his skills were below Add's without any hesitation?

Add had always looked down on him. He had always evaluated that this little kid was acting out of his place. But the whole thing looked different now after hearing the story about Elesis.

It wasn't because Elsword was proud of his skills that he was always trying to fight in the front head on.

He wants to become stronger quickly. That's right; Add now realized the meaning behind what Rena had been saying to him from time to time.

Elsword was desperate.

"Didn't you want to be recognized by becoming stronger?"

He wanted to catch up to his big sister that everyone recognised and looked up to, his big sister who had the title of the strongest on her back. That's why the boy endeavored with only a single mindset of becoming stronger.

He wasn't satisfied no matter how stronger he became, he didn't desire anyone else's compliments, and only followed after the back of a single person.

"....."

Elsword didn't say he wasn't. After a long moment later, Add saw Elsword's chin nod ever so slightly. Add smiled.

This wasn't a fake smile to show Elsword. Add smiled because he knew what was inside Elsword's heart right now.

The heart Add himself had lost long ago was in front of his eyes right now.

"Then show how much stronger you've become to Elesis. Fight and win, then drag her back here. You can't stand by idly and let the sister that you're so proud of be used as a hound for the demons right? The fact that she was on the demons' side can be dealt with by making up some reasonable excuses like she was brainwashed or something. Demon invasion will continue and her sins can be repaid with achievements. The fight will continue on so there will be plenty of chances for the strongest leader of the Red Knights to redeem herself."

"....."

"There, there's the third choice. What will you choose?"

With this, Add had used up all the methods that Eun told him. But no matter what choice Elsword made, Add was planning to respect his choice. Add himself was already ridiculing time, how can he blame Elsword for something so miniscule like surrendering himself to the demon army? He would rather side with and try to understand him.

If maybe Elsword chooses the second choice.....would Eve also follow him? Wait, then shouldn't I also just join the Demon army too?

Add didn't have too much interest about how the demon army was running amok in Elrios. The reason Add was hostile to the demons was because they were after the Queen of Nasods, Eve.

‘.....so the El Search Party would get disbanded.’

If Elsword, Eve and Add go over to the demon army, only Ara and Rena would remain. Ara could change her mind if she got carefully persuaded about how her older brother Ran was a demon general. Not only that, Add didn't know why demons were trying to destroy Eve.... But they wouldn't try to destroy her if she was their ally.

“.....”

Except Rena, no, shouldn't this problem be solved in an instant if they somehow persuaded even Rena and have the entire El Search Party join the demons? Elesis was already like that, there shouldn't be a reason why they won't accept other people.

It was a solution that he had thought of randomly, but Add felt increasingly drawn by it.

Add delved into his thoughts as he stroked his chin and subtly hoped that Elsword would choose the second choice. Depending on Elsword's choice right now, the result of most of the El Search Party joining the demons could happen.

It was a very appealing solution.

“After I meet with Big Sister tomorrow.....I'll listen to what she says. Then decide.”

“Fine, I'll arrange the meeting myself.”

Telling him to decide tonight was too much. When Add accepted frankly, Elsword nodded with a troubled face then was about to turn around and leave.....then paused.

“Big Brother Add, thank you for telling me about Big Sister.”

“Kukuk, it's nothing. It was a troubling matter on my side too.”

“Still, thank you.”

Elsword spoke those words then left the tent. Add who got left alone was about to think about the events of tomorrow. Then Eun with her hands behind her back walked inside the tent with carefree strides.

From how it looked, she must have been waiting for a moment to come in.

“Did the talk go well?”

“What will Elsword choose?”

Eun shook her head at Add’s question.

“Didn’t I say before that the secrets of the universe should not be revealed so carelessly? Clairvoyant powers aren’t something that can be overused.”

“.....”

Add wanted to prepare beforehand but he decided to let it pass. He’ll find out tomorrow anyways.

“Does boy feel that the choice joining the demons is appealing?”

“Ghost or fox, just choose one.”

When Add responded in displeasure, Eun laughed quietly.

“Are you that scared to stand against Elly?”

“.....”

They shouldn’t have to fight with Elesis if they joined the Demons. She was honestly an enemy that made your hair stand on ends. She closes in towards you despite how you had distanced yourself then tries to cut through your throat without taking any questions. It was stranger to not get scared.

Recalling it brings chills through his body.

“We lost even though we went in with a plan. You also said even you cannot guarantee a win against her.”

“You are acting like you’ll listen to me if I prophesized that you’d lose. I only presented the best possible solution I could think of. It’s not like I have a sure proof strategy. All I know is that when you continue to roll the dice called time travel, you sometimes get different types of numbers.”

“.....”

“But if I said it like this, would boy criticise me for only trying to satisfy my own greed?”

Eun smiled as she moved her tail and covered Add’s eyes with it. Add had his eyes closed anyways so nothing had changed much.

The soft sensation felt pleasant.

“But boy, there’s something you should not forget. The reason for your victory against Shadow Master wasn’t because you relied on my strength. Victory from that fight was the result of the El Search Party including the boy joining and fighting together as one. I only helped with the cleanup.”

“You’re saying something tiresome.”

If need be, he wanted to even borrow Eun's power to take down Elesis. But Eun didn't seem to have much intention of doing so.

Well, what Eun was saying did make sense.

".....So you're doing this to make Elsword fight too."

Elsword had been out of his mind during the first fight, and he was acting similarly during the second fight and only ended up becoming a meat shield.

So the El Search Party had never joined together as one to stand against Elesis before.

The reason for Add creating this situation by painting over time and even getting reproached by Eve was.....to give Elsword the will to fight even if he was to go against Elesis.

"I won't say that it's not."

So it means yes. Add finally understood as he nodded. They couldn't defeat Elesis even though Rena, Ara, Add and Eve had fought together. Then they had to bring in Elsword as well and face Elesis by focusing the capabilities of the entire El Search Party.

They still couldn't guarantee a victory, but there was no other way despite this.

"It would be easy if everyone just joined the demons."

"You must be really scared of Elly."

"I'm tired so get out now. I'll sleep for a bit."

The El Search Party's actions for the battle tomorrow had been decided but he still hadn't given the Velder Liberation army his plan. Since he talked big during the strategy meeting, he should at least draw them a rough sketch.

But Add was tired because he acted unlike himself and told Elsword various choices. He wanted to rest even for a bit.

"You were time traveling continuously so you must not have gotten any proper sleep. Have some rest for now."

"....."

His consciousness faded. To the point where he couldn't even think about removing the fox tail on top of his eyes.

When Add didn't answer, Eun moved her other tails to cover Add in piles of tails. They felt like a soft blanket.

"I heard using my tails as a pillow feels quite pleasant."

“.....I see.”

Flood rushing in, the string of tension snapped and Add fell into a far distant sleep.

Next day, the battle started with a pre-emptive strike from the demons just like in the other timelines.

In the quiet four way street far away from the location where the Velder Liberation Army was marching, Add stood in the front of the El Search Party and slightly took a look back at Ara who was standing by at the back. Ara who was looking very nervous from the shouts coming from far away tilted her head at Add's gaze.

“Mr.Add? Do you have something to say to me?”

“.....It's nothing.”

No matter how tired he was, to fall asleep so defencelessly. Add internally clicked his tongue then also examined the other members that were standing by at the back. Rena smiled beamingly when their eyes met, Eve didn't even bother to make eye contact.

It seemed what she said about not wanting to see Add ever again after this mission was serious.

“Kukukuk.”

Well, it did hang on his mind but that was something to worry about later. It was something to think about after they survived this fight in front of them right now.

Add collected his mind then turned his gaze to the red haired boy standing beside him.

Was it because he had cleared all his doubts during the night? Elsword with the sword in his hand looked nervous but his breath was calm. He won't stand around blankly this time at the least.

“Alright, let's go.”

“Okay.”

Elsword also started to move his steps at Add's words. Two boys walked forwards leaving Rena, Ara and Eve behind them.

Tens steps later.

Grrrrrrrrrr!!

Glitter Vanguard that had been hiding inside a building popped out and charged in towards Add. Ruthless charge like an enraged bull, he'll die if he got hit by it. But Add didn't react and only glared at the Glitter Vanguard while smiling coldly.

Slasssh!

With a heart chilling sound, woman standing proudly on top of the Glitter Vanguard swung her sword. Drak-red trace got carved in midair.....then Glitter Vanguard that had been charging towards them ruthlessly stopped still.

Just breaking it could have been done with a sheer destructive power. But stopping it while it was running at full speed with just a single strike, this was a proof that Elesis possessed not only power and speed, but precise skills as well.

Add internally dripped cold sweat while glaring at Glitter Vanguard and the girl standing on top of it. No matter how many times he saw it, her skills were extraordinary.

Girl with the sword leaning against her shoulder looked down haughtily. She could have smothered Add without even leaving a trace if she had charged in. But she stopped on purpose by destroying the Glitter Vanguard.

Because of the boy standing beside Add.

“Big Sister.”

“.....Yes.”

Elesis answered a moment later at Elsword’s call. It looked like she had a troubled expression for an instant, but a cold wind quickly blew across her face.

At least she didn’t start swinging her sword without taking any questions like before. Elsword looked up at her sister and spoke slowly.

“.....You were alive.”

“As you can see.”

It was the same dialogue from before Add had rewind time. But Elsword’s voice right now was much calmer. It was because he had known from Add beforehand that Elesis would appear before him as their enemy.

“Why.... Are you together with the demons?”

“Shouldn’t something else come first before we talk?”

Elesis lowered her stance as she slowly lowered her sword.

“Show me how much you’ve improved. Although this is not a sparring match.”

“.....Big Sister!”

Reunion of the siblings ended as the dialogue of the swords started.

When Elesis grabbed her sword and jumped up, Add who had been standing ready beside Elsword quickly activated the Dimension Distortion mode.

Elesis' sword stabbed into ground as it made a crack on the ground then called upon giant flames. But with dicey timing, Add and Elsword were protected by the Dimension Distortion and were able to not receive any damage.

No, that's how it should be. But it was way too hot!! Add frowned from the heat he felt from across the barrier.

"I should add a cooling mode to the Dynamo next time."

Add was leisurely chatting to himself right now....but they would have burned to death if Add had opened the Dimension Distortion mode even a moment later. Add was an engineer in the first place, not a combat agent. He had only carried out battles using shockwaves and space related abilities of the Dynamo he had created.

He didn't make a living off just Void Impact alone for no absolute reason.

When the Power Buster wasn't effective, Elesis slightly tilted her head as she stared at Elsword and Add being protected by the Dimension Distortion mode. But that only lasted for an instant and Elesis lowered her stance as she fixed her sword.

Dimension Distortion mode wasn't completely invincible, it will get broken through if it receives enough physical damage up to its limit. With Elesis' skills, she can probably easily break through....and cut across two of their throats.

"Let's start now!!"

But this was all within Add's calculations. Ara was already running towards them even before Add had shouted. He had originally instructed Ara to move after he had given the signal. But the fact that Ara would never follow those instructions and that she would start running even before Elesis made her jump was all within Add's expectations.

Clank!!

Ara's spear arrived just in time because Ara had gotten a head start. The spear clashed with Elesis' sword and let off a spark. Elesis made a slightly surprised expression then made a smile as if she was a bit impressed.

"As always, your speed alone is quite good."

"Mr.Add, quickly, back off!"

Add was combat personnel that supported from the mid range with various skills so he was defenceless in melee range. Ara shouted as she faced Elesis' chaotic attacks flying towards her, but Add didn't move.

This wasn't the time to run away. Add stared at Elsword who was biting his lower lip beside him.

"Alright, did you make your choice?"

".....Big Sister."

Elsword looked with a tormented expression at Ara and Elesis exchanging spears and swords.

His eyebrows shook regrettably, as if he couldn't understand, still, it looked as if he wanted to understand. It showed how tormented Elsword was right now.

"Choose quickly. Ara won't hold out for long."

It was just as Add said. Although Ara had dashed out with impact, she was starting to get gradually pushed back. Even though they were equals in speed, Ara fell behind in strength.

Ara's stance broke each time they exchanged attacks due to her falling behind in strength. This was a disadvantageous structure for Ara where her losses kept piling up because she had to carry out the battle in an unstable stance.

"Haaah!!"

Elesis swung her sword while she twirled on the spot to dodge the spear that Ara had stabbed sharply. Being extremely surprised that Elesis had unexpectedly evaded and attacked at the same time, Ara tried to dodge the sword by moving backwards. But Ara still needed more time to withdraw the spear she had thrust.

Slash.

With a chilling sound, blood dripped down Ara's cheek. By a hair's breadth. She would have lost her life if she was late in dodging by turning her head just a moment late.

Blood that dripped down from Ara's cheek soaked her white neck in red.

Elesis who had just missed her prey didn't look too regretful. Her attitude was as if she could catch her again whenever she wanted.

Elesis' eyes were focused on Rena and Eve at the back. She looked like she couldn't understand why Ara was fighting alone right now.

"I let you off this time.... But you'll die next time."

Her words were truth without any exaggeration. And Ara, the one who was fighting should know this better than anyone else.

But Ara didn't back off even from the strike just now that had endangered her life. She fixed her spear as she steadied her breath. Then her hairpin got pulled out on its own and her black hair was dyed in white.....a celestial aura started to dwell in her body.

Red eyes, nine tails, Ara in Celestial Fox state strengthened her resolve.

"A fight with someone powerful is the desire of all martial artists. I won't back out!"

".....Even Eun coming out wouldn't be enough here."

Elesis shook her head bitterly. Then her face turned cold like the sheet of ice. It was an expression filled with resolution, that she won't go easy anymore.

"Then shall I end it here this time?"

Only thing Ara had going for her was that at least their speeds were equal. She'll get overwhelmed if she even gave this up. Ara clearly knew that her skills were lacking but she had no choice but to charge in first. On the other hand, Elesis could leisurely respond to Ara's heated attacks and could threaten Ara's life with just a counter attack she performed from time to time.

"Choose quickly. Ara's going to die if this keeps up."

Add let out an indifferent voice while watching the fight outside the Dimension Distortion barrier.

He actually wanted to remove this quickly. Even Add who wasn't a warrior felt restless from watching Ara's dangerous struggle where she could get killed at any moment. But right now was the time to be patient.

"I'll....."

While watching Ara's back as she refused to back down even while getting injured, a will emerged in Elsword's eyes that were shaking before.

"I'll fight, Big Brother Add."

"...Then get out there right now!"

Add quickly released the Dimension Distortion soon as he heard the words he was waiting for. Just as Elsword collected his breath and dashed out resolutely, Add shouted with a loud voice.

"Rena, Eve! Do it now!!"

"Guide Arrow!"

Rena who had been desperately waiting for those words quickly let fly her arrows. The other two also had been unbearably restless while watching Ara's peril as she struggled alone.

But they didn't act because they were following Add's instructions.

His older sister was his enemy. What choice will the boy make in such a situation? They all had honored Elsword choice much as possible. This was limitlessly soft in Add's eyes. It was disgustingly soft hearted..... But this was a fight that could be established because they were the soft hearted El Search Party!

Ara groaned as she blocked with her spear's shaft the sword that Elesis swung down. The way how her spear made a creaking sound....Elesis's sword looked like it would immediately break through the spear and drop on top of Ara's head.

A sigh dwelled in Elesis's face as she continued to pressure Ara effortlessly.

"To not even think about coming out despite all this... Well fine.... Should I count this time as a failure too?"

Just when the coldness was emerging in Elesis' eyes, Elsword charged in from the side as he immediately stabbed with his sword.

"Assault Slash!!"

"Too slo...."

The attack was destructive, but she could see through everything. But Elesis who was about to dodge and respond to Elsword's attack saw the arrows drawing a curve as they flew in towards her. Elesis frowned as she quickly backed off.

Ara was too exhausted to chase after her right away and Elsword's stab only cut through the air.

"I'm sorry Big Sister Ara. For making you fight alone."

"It's not a problem Mr.Elsword. But.... Will you be alright?"

His older sister Elesis was his enemy. The El Search Party was worried that Elsword wouldn't be able to fight properly. That's why Ara had decided herself that she'll buy time while Rena and Eve had compromised to not intervene and observe until Elsword made his choice.

According to Add's evaluation, this was a picture that could be only established because they were the disgustingly soft hearted El Search Party.

"It's fine. Even if Big Sister is my enemy..... I'll fight. For my friends."

Elsword spoke with a bitter face then gripped his sword tightly as he looked at Elesis. Ara who had been giving Elsword a warm gaze also aimed her spear towards Elesis.

Elesis had just deflected some arrows and got hit by some. She was now busy dodging Add's shockwaves and Eve's periodical electron balls.

"Then I'll go in first."

"Let's go Big Sister Ara."

"Yes!"

Their dialogues mingled as the white spear and the red great sword dashed towards their enemy.

Elsword and Ara dashed in as they swapped between first and second positions repeatedly. Add saw this and shouted as he instructed their plan.

"Slowly drive her into the corner!"

He had already come up with a plan. The problem was if the other members could carry them out perfectly.

Just like they had planned, Eve and Rena weren't using any large skills and were focusing on keeping Elesis in check by firing only arrows and electron balls.

Then in Elesis' point of view, it was obvious what she had to do.....endure some losses and go after Rena and Eve at the back. It was an obvious choice for a swordsman to take care of the ranged attackers first.

But she couldn't do that. Ara who had dashed in first was pouring her attacks with the force clearly conveying that she won't give Elesis any room to go after the other members.

Elesis had been too busy dodging the torrent of arrows that she had an unstable stance as she took Ara's attack. But she managed to easily respond to Ara's spear despite her unstable stance. Then she was about to completely ignore Ara and dash into the El Search Party's back line....but then Elsword's sword arrived a moment later and stomped the ground to call upon giant flames.

"....."

Elesis' had no choice but to pause because her path had been blocked. Then Ara used that chance to sharply stab her spear again. Elesis dodged it by turning her neck sideways, but she had no choice but to back out because Elsword who had withdrawn the sword he had just stomped on the ground pressured with a heavy side swing.

After getting some distance, Elesis made up her mind to face the two melee fighters. But in that moment, Rena's arrows flew in towards her again, and when she dodged those, Eve's electron balls and Add's shockwaves flew in.

Elesis had to back off again. But when she did that, Ara and Elsword charged in towards her again.

“Kukukukuk! Great!”

Pincer attack, they assist and cover each other’s weak points while pressuring the enemy. It was all going according to his plan.

Add let out a joyful laugh when things were proceeding according to his thoughts. The reason they got pushed back by Elesis before was because Ara was the only fighter they had available to tie down Elesis in close quarters.

Ara was an extremely outstanding fighter, but she fell behind in Elesis in lots of ways in close quarter combat skills.

But if there was someone who could cover that gap? That person was Elsword. Add now realized why Eun told him to convince Elsword. Elsword certainly fell behind in skills compared to Ara, but he could help her tie down Elesis in close quarters.

They had the advantage if they kept this up. But Add never let his guard down even while he was smiling. Didn’t Elesis always immediately turn over the situation whenever they had a slight advantage?

As expected, Elesis who had been getting pushed back while receiving multiple small wounds in vain stiffened her face as if she saw through Add’s plan. That look was as if she was going to blow away Elsword and Ara in the front then take care of Rena and Eve at the back even if she had to receive some damage.

“Something big is coming!!”

Elesis was already kicking the ground and charging in when Add had only just started to shout. Ara attempted to respond to the flurry of sword strikes that Elesis launched after reaching her maximum speed in an instant but it was too chaotic.....

“Unlimited Blade!!”

But Elsword who lagged far behind Ara in speed moved forward and took Elesis’ swords head on. It was as if he knew the trajectories of the sword, the two of their swords performed a wild dance as they perfectly clashed and intermingled, then finally separated.

It was a strange scene where both Elsword and Elesis came out without any injuries despite exchanging countless attacks within such a short time.

“.....Hmm.”

Elesis also looked quite surprised. Elsword's strength was enough to take on Elesis' sword but he fell extremely far behind in speed. Elsword still managing to respond to all the attacks despite this meant that he knew where and when each attacks would fly in beforehand.

Elsword spoke quietly as if this was something trivial.

"I already know Big Sister's sword."

"....Really? Then how about this?"

As if this was pretty interesting, Elesis kicked the ground to get in position then launched a giant sword blast. But Elsword also performed the same movements the instant Elesis kicked the ground and launched a giant sword blast of his own to neutralize the attack.

"Spiral Blast..... I know that one too."

"Good, now you're acting somewhat like my brother."

Even though she was getting pushed back, even though her attack just got neutralized, Elesis' had quite an excited expression. Her eyes even showed signs of sparkling with joy.....She didn't hide how extremely happy she was at Elsword's accomplishments.

"Then how about this?"

Elesis seemed to suddenly dash in towards Elsword, then abruptly stabbed the ground in front of him with her sword. This must have been a skill that Elsword hadn't known and he reacted late, but Ara was already rushing in with a stab from beside Elesis.

Dark demonic energy was about to come out of the ground that the sword had stabbed into, but she'll receive a critical wound if she continued with this skill.

Elesis regrettably clicked her tongue as she pulled out her sword then backed off a wide distance. Ara had stabbed sharply with her spear in order to make Elesis back out. Ara quickly checked on Elsword's condition after Elesis backed off.

"Are you okay, Mr.Elsword?"

"Thanks for the help."

Elsword only looked in front of him as he thanked Ara. So that he wouldn't miss every single movement that Elesis made.

"Sorry, Big Sister Ara. I can't match up to my big sister yet. So please lend me your strength."

"Of course!"

Ara nodded as she smiled. Elesis also smiled as she threw a demonic energy around her.

“Injection!”

Blades surrounded and moved around Elesis. Ara had the reach of her spears so she could attack while adjusting her distance accordingly. But wouldn't it be hard for Elsword with the sword to approach her? You could tell with a single glance that those blades weren't any normal metal judging by how they negated the arrows and electron balls that flew in.

But Elsword looked slightly gloomy but didn't mind the blades as he quietly moved his steps as he threw a heavy strike at Elesis. The moment the blades spinning around Elesis were about to plunge into Elsword's body, Elsword's body seemed to get surrounded by a golden aura then the blades got deflected.

“.....So you mastered it?”

Elesis exclaimed in admiration as she caught Elsword's sword with her own. They were stuck so close together that it was difficult for the others to intervene.

The moment when Rena, Eve and Add stopped attacking, during the time when the two were face to face with each other with their swords crossed, Elsword replied with a low voice as he stared at Elesis.

“Because Big Sister mastered it too.”

“Yes, this is how it should be.”

Elesis replied with even nostalgia in her voice as she turned her waist to dodge. Elsword's kick grazed by dangerously close.

Elesis had quite a surprised face for a moment then laughed softly.

“Not bad at all.”

“I still have lots to show you, so....”

Elsword put all the strength he could muster into his sword. Creaaaaaak. Great sword and Demonic sword grinding together made an unpleasant sound, and then Elesis' feet started to get pushed back little by little.

“So try to hold out, Big Sister.”

“.....You're getting too overconfident.”

Elesis' eyes seemed to narrow then she abruptly abandoned her sword as she jumped back. Elsword's sword cut through empty air because he hadn't thought she'd let go of her sword to jump back in the middle of contest of strength. Others also couldn't react fast enough.

Elesis who had immediately gained her distance showed her back as she gathered Demonic energy.



“Because Big Sister mastered it too.”

“Yes, this is how it should be.”

“Ejection!”

“Everyone dodge to the side!!”

Add realized what this action meant and shouted as he quickly got on top of the Dynamos to throw his body sideways. But Elesis ejecting her gathered Demonic energy was faster!

“Buster!!”

Compressed dark-red Demonic energy became a light that erased everything and flew towards them. You couldn’t survive after getting caught up in that! The El Search Party members realized this and desperately tried to dodge. But the attack was so sudden that they couldn’t evade completely.

Boooooom!!

Ejection Buster stretched out and only stopped after it erased four buildings. The party was able to avoid getting hit directly thanks to Add’s shout.....but you couldn’t say that everyone was fine.

Add’s right arm became numb. Ara’s leg was hit and got covered in blood. Rena also got covered in blood to the point where her spine was almost showing, but only Eve didn’t have any injuries.

“Rena? Are you okay?”

It was because Rena had thrown her body while covering Eve. Add who had been looking around at this suddenly overturned situation got surprised at Eve’s voice and quickly turned his head.

Rena was smiling as she was standing up while being supported by Eve. It didn’t seem her injuries were life threatening.

But it was impossible for her to pull her bow freely after her back getting injured like that.

“Damn.....”

It turned out like this because of just a single moment of carelessness. When Elesis stretched out her hand as she stood proudly, the Demonic sword that was rolling on the floor flew on its own and returned to her hand. As if it had a will of its own.

“Ara, can you move?”

“Yes, of course!”

Ara was standing up while withstanding her pain. She could recover her injuries by fighting the enemy in the Celestial Fox state. Believe in this mechanic and continue the battle in the front line, give up on Rena’s complete support at the back line and continue pressuring with only Eve and Add.....

Add was quickly trying to adjust their plan then paused. An important person wasn't here. Ara and Elesis must have realized this too and looked around.

Elsword was nowhere to be seen.

"Could he have....?"

Was he unable to dodge the Ejection Buster and got hit directly? Elesis must have thought the same thing and was just blinking with a startled expression.

Surprise, anxiety and reclusion. It was a face that only a wild animal that had lost its child in front of its eyes would show. Add couldn't react at this face that seemed to be forcefully suppressing a heart wrenching scream. It was a numb minded face that was howling silently.

A sudden silence, no one opened their mouths.

Click.

".....I won."

Until Elsword spoke.

Elesis couldn't react right away and only blinked after a sword suddenly got leaned against her neck. Ara's face brightened.

"Mr.Elsword!"

"You were fine."

Eve also felt relieved and was calling out welcomingly. Add was also glad internally then got surprised by his own reaction. At the same time, he was also trying to retrace what Elsword did.

Elsword had charged forward in the moment when Elesis was trying to fire the Ejection Buster and rolled on the ground to get behind Elesis. He would have gotten hit directly by the Ejection Buster if he had been late for even a moment or if the distance of his roll had been insufficient.

Ejection Buster did clear out everything in the front of the user but it left the user's back wide open. Elsword had realized this instinctively and risked his life in order to catch Elesis' back!

".....Surrender, Big Sister."

"Didn't I say that....there's no surrender or retreat for the Red Knights?"

Elesis' attitude was leisurely despite how Elsword's blade was right beside her neck. It wasn't because she was thinking that Elsword wouldn't dare to swing his sword. She was rejoicing after confirming that Elsword was alive.

"Don't give her any openings!"

Just what kind of siblings were they? Add warned Elsword while in dismay. Elesis still had her sword in her hand.

The black panther was still looking for an opening. They'll get done in if Elsword didn't attack her now. Others also thought this too but no one could hasten Elsword.

How can you tell someone to strike down their own family?

"There's no meaning behind a sword that cannot be swung."

"....."

Elsword's hand shook at Elesis' answer. Elesis opened her eyes narrowly then put strength on the tip of her feet.

"I was hopeful, how unfortunate."

"Me too....."

The moment Elsword was trying to answer, Elesis immediately turned around to swing her sword. It was a bold attack not caring about the sword that was aimed at her neck. Also, Elesis was terrifyingly fast whenever she started to move.

But....Elsword's sword was moving faster than her.

"It's unfortunate, Big Sister."

The sword that was swung widely slashed across Elesis' chest. Just as Elesis' body froze at this critical attack, Elsword shouted with all his strength, almost like a scream.

"Double Slash!!"

Giant storm of sword energy battered Elesis' body.

Elesis didn't let out even a single scream as she held onto her sword and took the entire storm of sword energy that Elsword had swung then backed off a long distance. But that was all. Even the mighty Elesis must have reached her limit because she knelt on one knee as she panted heavily.

Elesis as she panted only had one eye opened that was looking at Elsword.

".....Why did you go easy?"

"I couldn't do it for real."

That was the only dialogue that went between the siblings. Elsword slowly withdrew his sword.



The blood dripping down from Elesis' body was soaking the ground but it wasn't a mortal wound. She could throw a Demonic energy then slash to recover like before. Add felt alert and quickly flew to stand beside Elsword.

Elesis' recovery effect only worked when the enemy was hit. Add prepared to open the Dimension Distortion mode at any moment as he spoke to Elsword.

"Aren't you going to finish her?"

".....I won't do more than this."

Add didn't speak anymore when Elsword heavily shook his head. You could tell with a single glance that Elesis couldn't continue to battle. She couldn't even stand up and was only panting.

Well, her eyes were still shining sharply.....and felt ominous. But they still couldn't kill her.

Because she was Elsword's precious person.

"....."

Wait, she's not even my precious person. Add questioned himself, and was very afraid of Elesis, but couldn't bring himself to think about using this chance to finish her off.

".....I'm disgustingly soft hearted too."

He must have become like this after hanging around with these soft hearted people. When Add was muttering, Ara, Eve and Rena approached from the back. Everyone was injured except for Eve but they weren't mortal wounds.

They won. They were victorious against the mighty powerful enemy Elesis, and won without losing anyone.

"Alright, then....."

Add was about to say let's restrain Elesis and retreat but paused. Left, right, front and back, loud noises were coming from every direction.

Sounds of hooves and running footsteps, also the sound of tank moving.

Grrrrrr!!

Glitter soldiers deftly jumped down from the building's rooftops. Not just one or two but dozens, and their numbers soon multiplied to hundreds before long as they made a tight formation to form a guard around now tired Elesis. Not only that, there were five Glitter Vanguard slowly approaching

from far away, and on the other side there were Glitter soldiers on Cockatigles running towards them.

“.....Reinforcements.”

They wasted too much time. This wasn't in Add's calculations. Something must have gone wrong from the Velder Liberation Army's side. No, the difference between their numbers was overwhelming. Even if the Liberation Army was proceeding with the plan safely, demons could have realized Elesis was in danger and deployed reinforcements.

It wasn't good either way. They could have handled them easily under normal circumstances. But most of the party had big or minor wounds.

“What should we do, Big Brother Add?”

“I should ask you, what are you going to do?”

Add was confused by Elsword's question and asked back. Why would he ask him if they should advance or retreat?

“What should we do, Mr.Add?”

“.....Why is everyone asking me?”

Rena wasn't saying anything and didn't look like she wanted to intervene. Eve stubbornly had her mouth shut tightly. It was as if since she had decided to ignore Add, she will continue to ignore Add till the end.

Anyways, they were finally able to defeat Elesis although barely. The problem now was if they should risk danger and go for a round of fight with the demons.....

Add would have normally suggested that they should retreat but his mouth was moving oppositely this time.

“We can't let her go when we almost got her. We'll break through everything, grab her, then retreat.”

“.....Can we?”

“You can go bring Elesis. There shouldn't be any problems then.”

Elesis was quite reluctant about injuring Elsword. No, was saying that she was afraid to injure him the more correct expression? Anyways, it looked like she was putting in an effort to hide it during their fight. But how Add saw it, even Elesis became dull when her enemy was Elsword.

Since she's now exhausted to the point where she couldn't even move, she wouldn't resist if Elsword dragged her here.

“Thank you, Big Brother Add.”

“Save your thanks....”

When Add was murmuring, Ara energetically grabbed her spear. Even if they were against hundreds of Glitter soldiers, even if heavy Glitter Vanguard got in their way, even though they were injured right now, there was nothing to be afraid of.

Because they were together.

“Then let’s clean this up quickly!”

“Wait, Ara. I’ll clean it up.”

“Your injury is bad, Rena. Just stand by.”

No one thought they were going to lose. Elsword also wordlessly boosted his spirit as he held his sword and Add muttered as he scraped together his mental strength.

They defeated even the all powerful Elesis, there was nothing to be afraid of from a mere demon army. They can just clean them up right awa.....

“Hahahahaha.....”

Right away.”

“Ahahahahaha!!”

That’s what he had thought. But the ominous laugh, the refreshing laugh rang across the reddened sky and brought a chill down Add’s spine. Other members were the same as they stopped talking and turned their eyes to the source of the laugh.

It seemed the Glitter soldiers also shared the ominous feeling as they staggered back. There was no one around her now as she laughed.

Elesis was kneeling on the ground as she leaned her exhausted body on her sword that was stabbed on the ground. She was laughing.

“Good, to think you’d come this far. Today was very good.”

“.....It’s useless to act tough.”

Add suppressed the ominous feeling and replied coldly. Wasn’t Elesis barely keeping herself up right now and leaning on her sword?

Slasssh!

But the moment Elesis looked like she was launching a Demonic energy beside her, she swung her sword sideways. Plop, with that sound, Glitter soldiers dropped and Elesis' wounds were healed.

For her to cut her allies to recover wounds.

Even Add was appalled by this method but he quickly formulated a plan. Even though she recovered her wounds, she won't be able to do anything about the blood loss. And truly, Elesis was still unable to get up.

She was just panting heavily while grabbing the handle of her sword with both her hands. They can storm in all at once.....

Ba-dump.

“The sword.....”

His heart beat strangely at the words that flowed out of Elesis' mouth. An ominous laugh, Add tried to think logically but an anxiety burst up in his heart.

“The sword remembers.”

“Everyone! Move back behind me!”

Along with Add's scream, Elesis' body abruptly got consumed in enormous flames.

It was a giant flame that burned not just Elesis' body but everything nearby her. Dark-red flame destroyed the ground and burned the sky. Glitter soldiers that had been nearby were burned to crisp without leaving even a piece of armor, and Add quickly opened the Dimension Distortion mode to block the flames from approaching.

Boooooom!!

Sound of Glitter Vanguard exploding could be heard, the flames that were overwhelming enough to burn away buildings nearby without a trace became a maelstrom and swept across the entire area. The heat storm even made the barrier crack. How can such a destructive power exist?!

“Uwaaah!”

“Kyaaaah!”

“Everyone hang on!”

Add clenched his teeth and tried to think of a way to respond but there was no other way. The Dynamos functioned on Add's mental energy. Dimension Distortion mode was the same so he could only focus on defending with his mind.

“Ah.”

Blood dripped down Add's lips along with his groan. His body was feeling the after effects due to the overexerting defensive calculations. The source of this problem was that he had stretched the barrier too widely in order to protect Eve, Ara, Elsword and Rena as well.

If Add didn't decrease the radius.....he could die. But Add didn't care as he withstood with pure willpower.

It was a victory he had finally achieved, this was a time he obtained after going through so much efforts. He couldn't give in to this Elesis' last ditch effort. He had to withstand it.

Whoooooosh.

With a strange noise, the terrifying flame storm disappeared as if it got washed away. Add caught his breath as he groaned and looked forwards. Hundreds of demons had disappeared without a trace, and the ground got melted from the heat and even changed the terrain.

It was a devastated hell.

"I, is it over.....?"

They still survived. Add confirmed quickly while still looking at the front.

"Is everyone alive?"

".....Ugh."

"I'm fine!"

"....Just what happened right now?"

"Is everyone okay?"

Add let out a sigh of relief at the sounds that came from his back. They had somehow withstood Elesis' final attack.....

Ba-dump.

But the feelings of relief flew off quickly when he saw a human form standing in the place where Elesis was.

Long red hair, red clothes. Beautiful flames waving near her. A heartless hollow gaze.

Eyes without a single speck of light was staring at the El Search Party.

".....Big Sister grew?"

Elsword's groan was telling Add the answer but he couldn't believe it.



Did her appearance change after suddenly growing? Her weapon and clothes had changed as well. No, putting all those aside, her atmosphere was completely different.

If she was a clever black panther up till now, this now was solely a crimson sword stained in blood.

It was a change as if she had accelerated her own time.

“Memory of the sword.”

She recited coldly. Elesis who had suddenly grown spoke quietly as she lowered her stance.

Add realized what that stance meant and quickly shouted.

“Warc.....”

“Blood Cutter!!”

Even before Add’s words finished, Dark-red Demonic energy rotated sharply as it flew toward them. The barrier that had been barely holding out until now got shredded like a piece of paper. Everyone tried to evade much as possible but it was no use.

“Aaaah!”

The giant demonic energy spun and tore through the El Search Party’s bodies. Everyone got flung out and couldn’t get up from the shock that felt like their bodies were getting sliced apart by a saw. Add who had gotten hit directly because he was at the front couldn’t even think about getting up as he panted heavily on the ground.

The sky was still red.

“Haah, haaah....”

Just what was that? She suddenly got older then became unimaginably stronger. Add’s head thought quickly but couldn’t make any conclusions. He could only confirm that others were still alive by the sound of their gestures.

The shock had somewhat been mitigated because the Dimension Distortion had been open. They would have all got killed instantly if they had gotten hit without any defenses.

“Ughhh.”

They thought they had won but they were completely wrong. The flame attack just now wasn’t her last ditch struggle. It was just a stepping stone, a passing point.

They hadn’t exposed the full extent of her skills. She just had been facing the El Search Party by matching herself to the party’s level. Elesis had been hiding her true skills from the beginning.

And she was now finally trying to face them for real.

“She’s.....unbelievably strong.”

It was so stunning that he couldn’t even scream. Even though Add thought this.....He forcefully pushed the ground to get up. No matter what happened, he couldn’t die while lying down and doing nothing.

Did the others have the same thoughts? Everyone was getting up. Blood Cutter had inflicted injuries enough to make it difficult to bring up their bodies. Ara got up by leaning on her spear, Elsword by leaning on his sword and Rena and Eve were leaning on each other as they got up.

And Add stood up by himself solely on willpower.

Add barely managed to remove his hands from his knees then looked at the red warrior staring quietly at them in the distance.

“Alright, this is the real beginning.”

“.....Son of a”

Add spat out a swear despite not knowing who the swear was directed against.

It was so stupid that he only felt like shutting everything down and just quitting. I actually tried to beat this thing? Am I a complete lunatic? Only these thoughts came up in his mind.

“Sorry.”

Add apologized without directing his words to anyone in particular. He couldn’t bear without apologizing.

“My plan was.... mistaken. I’m sorry.”

They should have just surrendered if Elesis was this much of a monster. We can win if Elsword just came to his senses and fought? What kind of delusion was that?

They couldn’t beat something like this.

But answer returned from an apology that he hadn’t expected any response to.

“We didn’t lose yet!!”

“.....I can still fight!”

Elsword and Ara both held their weapons and enflamed their fighting spirits again. They had deep wounds so it would have been difficult for them to even move their bodies.

“It’s fine Add. I have something I kept saved up.”

“Same for me. We didn’t lose yet.”

Rena and Eve answered similarly. Add stared at the other members dejectedly then shook his head at this nonsense.

He didn't know if they were bluffing or not. No, did it matter either way? The party was currently enflaming their fighting spirits, that they won't back off even against Elesis who had just revealed her true self.

Watching this, Add also started having the same feelings as them for some stupid reason. His body was in tatters, his mental strength was completely exhausted, but he was feeling that he could still do this.

Did he get infected by their disgustingly soft hearted attitudes? Add laughed dejectedly.

“Kahahah.....”

Normally, he should have at least tried to come up with a plan to retreat, no, he should have at least called Eun out to time travel. But those thoughts never came to him.

He thought that there won't be any point in doing so right now. He didn't know clearly, but a thought that he had to face Elesis right now even if he had to burn out everything came into his mind.

Even if the result was annihilation of the El Search Party.

“Am I finally crazy too.....?”

When Add was laughing, Elsword approached and stood beside him. Ara and Rena, then finally Eve approached as well and they all stood side by side. It was a completely messy combination that didn't take into account any strategic formations. But Add didn't care right now.

His heart felt soothing instead.

“Alright, I have a plan.”

He didn't have any plans to get in even a single blow on that heartless, proud and stupidly powerful Elesis, but he had to squeeze one out this instant. Isn't he the only one that can at least present this scatterbrained, mucked up and disgustingly soft hearted El Search Party with some plans and measures?

Seriously, give me a break.

Even while Add thought this, his mouth was smiling delightfully.

“This isn't bad.....”

Everyone was waiting for Add's word. Even Elesis was waiting as if she was going to give them some final moments.

“Then let’s....”

Just in the moment when Add was about to break the silence, in the moment when Elesis was about to lean forward and charge in, something bizarre happened.

Space.....got twisted.

It could only be described that way. Empty space was spiraling and getting twisted.

An abnormality was happening exactly in between the El Search Party and Elesis. Elesis who was about to charge in stopped and frowned.

“What’s that?”

Add’s question was representing the entire El Search Party’s thoughts. Just what was about to happen? The empty space that got overly squeezed and twisted now made a cracking noise as cracks appeared on it. Then it shattered as if it was made out of glass.

There was a movement inside the shattered empty space.

“That’s too harsh, Big Sister Elly.”

A fruity voice came from inside the purple hole. You could tell from just hearing her voice that the owner had a lively and overly confident personality.

“If you’re going to be like that, then I’ll have to intervene as well.”

White arm abruptly popped out of the purple empty space. It was a person’s, a girl’s arm. The El Search Party and Elesis stood still and looked at the person that just appeared as if they were mesmerized.

Purple haired girl that abruptly appeared by shattering space. The girl who wore bold attire that excessively revealed her belly didn’t express any interest in Elesis and took a glance around at the El Search Party.

“Nice to meet you all.”

The most powerful magician in the world smiled.



3. Purple Quality

The purple haired girl that suddenly appeared between Elesis and the El Search Party, she was a face that they've never seen before.

As the El Search Party were asking each other with eye gestures if any one of them knew this girl, the girl lightly swung the staff she was carrying.

Staff? No, upon closer look, it was a halberd. It won't end with just pain if you were to get stomped by that.

"Don't ask who I am. You won't say that you don't recognise the Great Genius Magical Girl Aisha right? I won't let you off easily if anyone says that they don't know."

"....."

The girl gave a cute wink after revealing her name as Aisha. The El Search Party that had been prepared to fight to the death against Elesis after she revealed her true form were all flabbergasted by this atmosphere and couldn't reply.

"Ah, geez~. Why is everyone making such stiff faces when I actually came out to help? You should all be clapping in joy."

".....Hmm."

Elesis standing at the back made an odd fake cough. When Aisha reacted to this and turned around, Elesis quietly conveyed her message by pointing with her finger.

Aisha saw this and looked down at her own chest area then let out a sigh.

"Ah, oops. I got the Job mixed up a bit. But this isn't the time for this."

Aisha murmured as she sighed then narrowed her eyes as she looked at Elesis.

"Alright, you went too far. Go back now, Big Sister Elly."

"You are the one who's going too far. Why are you intervening as you please, Dimension Princess?"

"I told you to call me Void Princess when I'm like this. Well, I admit that the name is quite fitting but identity is important after all."

"That's not someone who gets them mixed up should say."

Elesis was replying bluntly but it didn't look like she wanted to immediately solve this by violence. Did they know each other?

But seeing how Elsword was looking at her as if he didn't recognise her, it looked like only Elesis and Aisha knew each other.

Add narrowed his eyes and focused his ears on the two's conversation.

"Elsword and I are talking. Back off."

"Well, I've been respecting that up till now. But I don't want to this time."

".....Are you saying you want to fight me?"

Aisha let out a short laugh when Elesis asked with a low voice.

"We both already know that we haven't clashed before because I was afraid of Big Sister Elly. And it's also not because Big Sister Elly was afraid of me."

"....."

"I'd like you to respect my actions this time, can you?"

Aisha spoke this line then smiled as.....she swung her halberd lightly. Plasma was created from tip of her halberd as two streams of intense light got fired forwards. The El Search Party that was looking at this thought that she had ambushed during the middle of their conversation. But the attack wasn't aimed at Elesis.

Plasma Cutter that had flown far caused a roar far behind Elesis as it broke down dozens of buildings. Aisha made a pose of looking far out into the distance by putting her hand on top of her eyebrows. She then exclaimed as if she was bewildered.

"Wow! There were so many demons here! I think even for me it would take around 1 minute to clean them all up!"

"....."

"Ah, but with this, maybe it should only take around 30 seconds?"

A threatening blue energy started to gather in front of the halberd. Seeing this, Elesis sighed as she leaned her sword against her shoulder.

"Just this once."

"Thanks~"

Elesis didn't even listen to Aisha's thanks as she turned around to walk away. The El Search Party couldn't believe this situation and stared numbly.

For that Elesis to back down on her own?

“Big Sister!!”

When Elsword ran forwards as he called out, Aisha clicked her tongue.

“Don’t follow her Elsword. Big Sister Elly let us off because of me. I’ll have to join and fight as well if you follow her right now.”

“Big Sister!!”

Is he deaf? Add came to his senses and tried to manipulate the Dynamos to stop Elsword.

The identity of this self proclaimed genius magician that appeared to help them all of a sudden was really suspicious. But it was true that they just got helped.

Anyways, letting Elsword run after Elesis right now would be setting things back to point zero. But unlike Add’s worries, Elsword’s strides as he ran after Elesis gradually slowed down. It soon became a walk then Elsword came to a stop and looked down at the ground with his fists clenched tightly.

Elesis didn’t even look back once at her brother and was walking away silently. No matter how desperately he called.

“.....”

Elsword stood weakly and didn’t say anything. Add saw his shaking shoulders but pretended he didn’t see as he checked up on conditions of the other members.

“Everyone is fine for now. But....”

Their injuries were bad but they weren’t bad enough to leave any after effects. They’ll be back to normal if they eat well and heal up.

Add trailed his words and took a slight glance at Aisha who was smiling proudly.

“Who are you?”

“Didn’t I tell you not to ask that question?”

Aisha showed a slightly gloomy face then quickly smiled again as she lightly swung her halberd.

“Well, it seems like the story will get long. So I’ll invite you all to my villa. We can talk in detail there.”

“Wait, where....”

Wasn’t the Velder Liberation army still fighting with the demon army? Add was about to protest but stopped to only blink vacantly when the scenery changed in front of his eyes. Just a moment ago they were fighting inside a destroyed city, amongst the ruins....

Now there was a horizon in front of his eyes.

“.....Ocean?”

“It’s an ocean.”

“So this is the ocean?”

“It’s been a while since I’ve seen an ocean.”

Everyone else gave their words so it wasn’t Add hallucinating by himself. Add rubbed his eyes then turned around to stare at Aisha with an astonished gaze.

Aisha was about to open a sunbed that had been leaning against a palm tree.

‘.....Wasn’t this space warp? And teleporting not only herself but other people as well?’

Add who knew how to use a short distance space warp himself was so shocked that he could almost faint. Of course, the quantum teleport that Add used was also an amazing skill. But that was only for personal teleportation and was only limited to short distances.

But this was clearly an ocean..... It must be extremely far away from Velder that the El Search Party had been fighting in just now.

“Just.....what are you?”

When Add asked while still unable to hide his surprise, Aisha who just finished opening the sunbed turned around and smiled.

“Didn’t I tell you? I’m the Great Genius Magical Girl Aisha.”

“.....That’s not a proper explanation.”

Add had known the existence of magic but he had never heard that it could accomplish such nonsensical things. Add would obviously have also tried to master magic if it was something that allowed you to wield this much power as if it was no big deal.

“Then would you be able to understand if I said I’m the Super Great Aisha that got all her magic powers back after finding the ring?”

“.....”

It was not a proper explanation since he still couldn’t understand. She was smiling kindly but you couldn’t tell her inner thoughts.

Just when Add was about to question Aisha again, Rena spoke gravely instead.

“Thank you for inviting us but could you let us go back? Other people are fighting in Velder right now.”

“Ah, that’s right. I forgot. I’ll go take care of it right away.”

Aisha disappeared instantly after she replied lightly. The El Search Party couldn’t even get surprised anymore after she disappeared without showing any signs.

“She’s really gone.”

“.....It’s not an optical camouflage.”

Eve and Add unknowingly shared their opinions about Aisha’s disappearance. It was such a logic defying power that it was dumbfounding to watch.

You could tell easily that Aisha possessed amazing powers just by seeing how she had teleported the entire El Search party as if it was nothing special.

“I finished it. There shouldn’t be any problems now.”

To the point where you couldn’t doubt her powers even after seeing Aisha who had appeared on the sunbed 15 seconds later to drink a grape juice out of the straw.

“Uh, umm..... Is it really okay now?”

Ara asked with an innocent face as if she couldn’t understand. It was obvious that you couldn’t believe when she had suddenly disappeared then reappeared saying everything was finished now.

“I tied them down with a dimension barrier. The demon army that captured Velder won’t be able to come out for a while. Well, couple individuals could come out if they wanted to but they wouldn’t dare come out carelessly.”

“Ah.....I thought I’ve heard the name Aisha somewhere before. I finally remembered.”

When Rena spoke as if she had recalled memory from a far past, Aisha looked at her with an extremely surprised expression.

“D, do you remember? Big Sister Rena?”

“Velder Kingdom’s court magician. A girl magician who’s supposed to surpass all the geniuses in history but no one had ever seen her face. Is that you?”

“.....Oh, you remembered that?”

Aisha nodded with a quite disappointed look.

“Well, that’s right. I’m a court magician. Although I just took the title because they begged me so desperately. Angkor, stop sitting around and work.”

Aisha made a displeased expression as she let fly a miniature devil that was sitting on her shoulder. Miniature devil that flew across while flapping its wings was about to open up extra sunbeds then saw the gears floating near Eve and tilted its head.

Did it think that the gears were same kind as it? Miniature devil called Angkor stopped opening the sunbeds and circled around Reby and Moby.

“Angkor, didn’t I tell you to work? Do you want to get scolded?”

When Aisha coaxed with a low voice, Angkor winced then hurriedly started opening the sunbeds again. The El Search Party could tell that Aisha’s mood had worsened and nervously watched quietly.

Since she was a Velder Kingdom’s court magician it seemed like she was an ally....but they couldn’t tell clearly. Even more after seeing how she was drinking a grape juice with such a displeased expression.

“Umm....”

“Thank you for helping. But I’ll have to ask a couple of questions. But first, we’d like to treat our injuries.”

Add cut off Rena’s words then requested the most urgent thing first. Aisha narrowed her eyes then snapped her fingers.

Then a golden circle surrounding Add and the El Search Party was formed then everyone’s wounds started to heal gradually. Not just their wounds but their clothes were getting recovered as well. As if time was getting rewound.

“Magic is...quite surprising.”

“It’s amazing!”

Even Eve who had a strong pride in Nasod’s technology couldn’t hide her amazement. Ara looked like she didn’t know how to react as she stroked the place on her body where the bleeding wound had been before.

Add also realized his body had recovered to a perfect state within couple of seconds. But he couldn’t stay amazed like the others. He got that Aisha was a magician of unimaginable caliber.....but that wasn’t a reason to trust her blindly.

“Since you are all healed now, go take a look around the island for some mood change. I’ll call everyone when dinner is ready.”

Aisha spoke these words then closed her eyes. It seemed like she was about to take a nap so Add spoke to Rena.

“Go take the others and look around. Especially...”

Add made an eye gesture to point at Elsword who hadn't spoken a word since Elesis had left.

You couldn't even ignore him if he was looking like that.

Rena realized what Add was trying to say and took the others and walked away along the beach. Add opened his mouth when the others had gone far away enough to the point where the sound of them exclaiming at the beautiful scenery couldn't be heard anymore.

"You, just what's your identity?"

"Sometimes, a magical girl who changes using power of the moonlight. Sometimes, a dark magician who rules over darkness after making a contract with the Demon God. Sometimes, a grand magician who freely manipulates power of the elements. Shortened to five words A-i-s-h-a. Lengthened to Magician Aisha. If you're asking about the very essence, the Great Genius Magician Aisha."

Her self explanation came out fluently but it was an incoherent chatter and didn't digest at all. Judging by what Rena said, she must be a Velder Kingdom's court magician.....

"How come you have so much power? No, why didn't you do anything if you had this much power?"

"I helped you and now you're whining to me about why I only observed and didn't help? Since when did you become a brat like Elsword, Add?"

"....."

Add couldn't speak when Aisha shot back while opening only one eye. Well, what he said did sound like the person who just got saved from drowning asking for their savior's belongings..... But he still couldn't pass this over by just replying 'Oh is that so?'.

"What's your relationship with Elesis?"

"Is it so strange for the Velder Kingdom's strongest leader of the Red Knights and its court magician to be acquainted?"

Aisha asked with a tone as if she was asking if there was something wrong.

"I can tell with a single glance that you are no mere acquaintances. Isn't it strange for a woman that's merciless even to her own brother to back off with you just saying couple words?"

"Would it be an acceptable answer if I said.....we were comrades that had been together before but now separated because our purposes disagreed?"

Aisha replied back with still only one eye opened. There was nostalgia mixed into her voice as if she was recalling her memories.

"I'm answering you because I know that you're asking in the place of everyone else. Be thankful."

How can she be so impudent? But it was kind of understandable considering her skills.

She looked around Add's age on the outside..... But her skills were honestly terrifying. Didn't she make Elsis, who had driven the El Search Party into a brink of annihilation, back off with just couple words and a light(?) display of skill?

"Alright, leaving that aside. What do you plan on doing next? Shouldn't you quickly liberate Velder now?"

"I have no such intention."

Aisha closed her eyes again then stretched out her arms as she yawned. She totally looked sleepy.

Add was a bit confused at this unexpected reaction from Aisha. Of course, it wasn't because Add had suddenly sprouted patriotism towards the Velder Kingdom, or that he had a sudden surge of righteousness about how Velder's suffering citizens should be liberated soon as possible.

But shouldn't it be sensible for this girl who had a title of the Velder Kingdom's court magician to have these thoughts instead?

"You can perform this much amazing magic. But you're saying that you'll just watch the demons run amok in Elrios?"

"You now even got a talent for oration? Why don't you become a politician?"

Aisha let out a laugh as if she was amused. Actually, even Add was a bit embarrassed after he had said it. Wasn't it basically saying something that wasn't on his mind just so he could urge other people to do something?

But Aisha didn't change her mind despite how Add had asked while enduring embarrassment.

"I have various restrictions as well so I can't wield my powers however I wish. Also, the current situation isn't even bad enough for me to have to step up. Most of all, this is my first leisure time in a while so I want to rest for a bit."

"....."

Well, she would have acted already if she was going to change her mind from Add who was a total stranger trying to convince her. Aisha's tone was as if she had finished all her duties after she saved the El Search Party from a brink of annihilation and restricted the Velder's demons.

Just this much was amazing already. Didn't she accomplish something that anyone else couldn't even have dream of within just couple minutes?

He didn't know what the restriction was but if Aisha could change her mind, then everything will be....

“Can you continue to....”

“I refuse.”

Aisha didn't even bother listening to Add as she cut him off. Add shut his mouth in shame after getting his inner thoughts found out.

Aisha opened her eyes and raised her upper body and spoke as she looked at Add.

“This is the last time I'm helping you guys. I understand you got scared by Big Sister Elly but don't think about relying on me anymore.”

“Who said I got scared?”

Aisha laughed when Add raised his temper.

“You don't have to be embarrassed. Even I don't want to face Big Sister Elly too much. Well, we're actually avoiding each other.”

“.....”

Add couldn't say anything at this consolation that wasn't actually consoling. If Aisha came with the El Search Party right now, everything will get solved lightning fast. Such a powerful magician, wasn't she probably the most powerful magician in history?

But Aisha clearly revealed her intention to refuse.

“Saving Eve isn't my task. It's yours. Am I right?”

“.....”

Does magic also allow you to read minds? But considering how she knew everyone's names, and how she had personally come to save the El Search Party, Aisha seemed to know a lot about their group.

Although she still wouldn't know about time travel..... Add examined Aisha but she had her eyes closed and was bathing in sunlight.

“If you're done talking, why don't you go take a walk around while relaxing? You didn't have any moment to rest recently right?”

“I won't trust everything that you say.”

Add spoke bluntly and moved his steps. Aisha behind him was making an empty laugh but he ignored it. He walked along the beach following footprints that the others members left behind.

Add was silently walking along the beach then he realized that footprints were staggered all over the place. You could distinguish them if you looked carefully.

Thin footprints were Rena's, since she walks with light steps.

The flawlessly precise ones should be Eve's and the ones with dizzy and disorderly strides must be without a doubt Ara's.

But the footprints were separated. Crossroads, Add hesitated for a moment in the place where the footprints separated into a beach and a forest.

Where Eve headed was the forest.... But what can he do by meeting with her right now?

He even heard from her to let's never see each other's face again after the business with Elesis was over. Of course, Add wasn't intending on accepting those words quietly..... But nothing would get solved by meeting with Eve without any plans.

"Tch."

Although Add didn't like it, he walked along the beach. The scenery of the beach where the white foams broke after hitting the rocks and blue water sweeping in and out of the golden sands was truly beautiful.

Almost to the point where the fact that they were risking their lives to fight Elesis a while ago felt like a dream.

"....."

Add unknowingly stroke his neck and gulped. If things went wrong just a little bit.....his head would have gotten chopped up by Elesis. And there were actually instances where it almost happened. This wasn't just for him. It was the same for the other members as well.

Add stopped to look across the horizon and muttered on his own.

"What should we.....do now?"

Aisha pushed the El Search Party away asking them to take some moments to rest.....

But Add couldn't follow this. His head became so complicated that no thoughts came to him. No, there was one thought that came up clearly, but he didn't want to admit it.

They lost.

The El Search Party lost against Elesis.

Add who could time travel, Elsword who threw himself into the fight despite her sister being the enemy, Ara who fought braver than anyone else, Rena and Eve who assisted in every critical moment.

Even though they threw the entirety of the El Search Party's abilities against her.....they still lost to Elesis. Bringing out her true abilities was their limit.

It was an indisputable defeat.

“.....Kukuk.”

Add let out a dejected laugh. Even though he had the power to rewind time, there was absolutely no possibility that he could fight Elesis and defeat her.

Right now, he should be thankful that he even survived through the ordeal. Add hated himself for thinking like this, for being glad that he was just able to survive..... It was way too pathetic.

“Kahahahahaha!!”

“Ahaha!!”

Add who was bursting out into laughter immediately stopped when someone else laughed along with him. Was this the feeling of where someone was letting out their feelings alone but realized that someone else was listening in on them? When Add got surprised and turn around, he discovered a girl cheerfully running along the beach.

Black hair, white clothes. She was far away but it was obvious who she was.

Ara who had been cheerfully laughing and running by herself saw Add and waved her hand towards him. She didn't slow her speed down at all as she ran towards Add.

“So Mr.Add is here too?”

“.....”

Add was at a loss for words when he saw Ara smile without any folds on her face. How can she change her mood so quickly? She was very cheerful right now as if she had completely forgotten about the fact that she was fighting with her life on the line just a while before.

Ara didn't mind Add's dumfounded gaze as she looked around the ocean again. The ocean wind made her long black hair wave.

“Ah, look. Mr.Crab is walking over there!”

“.....”

Ara discovered a crab that was scurrying busily along the beach and called Add over with a hand gesture. Ara crouched down and enjoyably watched the crab moving then waved her hand towards Add to urge him to come over.

She totally had an attitude of enjoying a vacation.

“Just how are you so.....”

Regardless of how Add sighed or not, Ara was now picking up a conch shell and putting it near her ear to listen to the sound coming from inside. She was totally having fun.

Add had realized this late but Ara had her shoes off and was barefoot. She carefully approached to the point where the waves reached and dipped her ankles in sea water.

“.....”

Anything he said would be useless at this point. Add was dumbstruck but he still couldn't say anything to Ara.

Wasn't Ara the one who had to go through most life threatening moments? Eun didn't come out to fight and Ara had to stay in the front line facing Elesis' swords strikes with only her spear skills..... She had a right to relax and rest like this.

“Mr.Add should come here too! It feels cool!”

“.....I'm fine.”

Ara did her duties. She fulfilled all her obligations as the member of the El Search Party. No one could blame her or tell her to bear this heavy weight of defeat.

“But it feels really cool.”

“I said I'm fine. Where's Rena?”

Add refused Ara's request and asked for Rena's whereabouts. The El Search Party's leader was Rena so he should discuss their future plans with her.

The El Search Party as they were right now couldn't defeat Elesis. They had to admit this fact then start thinking about their next course of action.

“She's under the tree over there.”

When he looked towards the far off direction tip of Ara's hand was pointing to, he could see a person sitting modestly under a palm tree.

“We're going to have a serious talk now so don't get in the way. Stay here and play.”

“Will you play together with me after you're done?”

Add felt a bit annoyed when Ara asked while smiling merrily. No matter how naïve Ara was, this was after such things had happened. Wasn't she too carefree?

When Add shot a gaze at her, Ara slightly turned her head around to avoid his gaze.

"Because there's no point in being restless."

"...."

Add instinctively realized what she meant and swallowed the words he was about to say.

It wasn't that Ara didn't really have any thoughts. The fact that she lacked the skills to face Elesis, she should know this better than anyone else without having someone else telling her.

"I was actually going to start training right away but Lord Eun stopped me. So I decided to relax for today."

"Yes.... Go ahead and relax."

"Then will you play together with me after you're done talking?"

Ara spoke with a smile but Add ignored and headed towards Rena.

Well, he could play along with her for a bit if he felt like it after he finished talking with Rena.

Rena was sitting quietly under the palm tree's shade and looking towards the horizon with her legs put together prettily. When Add approached close, she turned her head towards him and made a beautiful smile.

"How's your body?"

"There's no problem. I can fight again if I had to."

Add replied bluntly then stared down at Rena while standing still. Rena was smiling as usual but they couldn't converse normally.

"Like I said before, my calculations were off. I made a mistake."

"That wasn't Add's fault."

Rena shook her head but Add couldn't accept it.

"That's my fault. I should have known...."

He even had the power to go back in time but still hadn't realized Elesis' true abilities. Of course there would have been a limit because Add wasn't a warrior.... But he still couldn't shake off the guilt.

His calculations were wrong. He didn't want to admit this but he had to.

"You can do well next time."

"I'm not crying to have you comfort me. What are we going to do now?"

"I don't know. What should we do?"

Rena replied with a voice that was soft as a spring wind and looked up at Add to seek for an answer. Add was about to urge her to answer but realized that there was a gloom under the tip of her smile and stopped.

Rena spoke first after a moment.

"I'm sorry. My thoughts were wrong. I've got nothing to say to Raven now."

"It's not something you should apologize for. It's my plan that was wrong."

Add repeated his words with a strict tone as if he was scolding her.

The El Search Party had moved perfectly according to Add's instructions. Didn't Elsword even surpass Add's calculations and displayed transcending abilities to defeat Elesis at least once?

"But...."

"I'm not doing this so we can lick each other's wounds. Let's just end this by saying it was a mistake in my calculations. I'm asking about what we should do now."

"...."

"That magician called Aisha says she doesn't intend to help anymore."

Their lives had been barely saved from the clutches of death by an abrupt helping hand. Nothing would change even if they went back to Velder.

Elesis will be waiting for them and the El Search Party cannot defeat her.

"I'm not too sure myself."

When Rena honestly admitted, Add closed his eyes then let out a sigh.

No, shouldn't this be obvious? Even Add himself was stifled and restless right now. That was why he ended up forcefully questioning Rena right now. No matter how extremely skilled Rena was, she wouldn't know more and look ahead more than Add who could rewind time.

Even Eun could have been more helpful in this situation. But judging by how Ara was playing by herself far away, Eun didn't look like she wanted to come out and help.

"You must have been troubled as well. Sorry, I said something dumb. Let's talk about this later so rest up for now."

"Yes, Add too."

"Also...."

Add held out the hand he had behind his back. It was a conch shell that he picked up on the way.

"Listen to this if you get bored."

"Are you giving it to me?"

Rena asked with a surprised expression. Add replied bluntly then turned his body around.

"They're everywhere anyways."

"Thanks."

Stop thanking me for something so useless. Add spoke this in his mind then moved his steps. Ara was waving her hand telling him to come over quickly but he ignored and got on the Dynamos.

Only after Add had forcefully questioned Rena, he realized that he was uneasy, that he was lost.

He needed some time alone to think about what he should do next.

Evening, Aisha's villa.

The El Search Party sat around the table and quietly ate the dinner that Angkor had supposedly made. They were simple foods consisting meat, soup and vegetables but the qualities of the ingredients were nice so it tasted good.

But even Elsword and Ara who would have normally been talking busily were just eating quietly. Only the owner of the villa Aisha talked lively amidst this deathly silent dinner table.

"How is it? This is Angkor's cooking. Isn't it good? It was a big problem before when Angkor couldn't even chop up a slice of meat."

"It doesn't taste bad."

Add had to answer her accordingly because no one else answered. Aisha stretched out her chest and nodded proudly.

“You won’t find any other magicians like me that can make a Demon God prepare meals! You guys should also make sure to get a good taste of this.”

“I’ll do that.”

Seriously, someone say something. Add answered accordingly while muttering in his mind. He had to talk because he didn’t like the current atmosphere of this table.

Everyone was mechanically chewing the food in front of them. Eve, Elsword, Rena and Ara all had a depressed expression and didn’t say a word.

Add boiled up from inside when he saw them all nibble with a gloomy faces. Add pushed down and suppressed this unknown displeasure rising up from within him as he swallowed some vegetables without chewing properly.

“Alright, if everyone had enough to eat, then let’s go take a bath with just all the girls. We even have warm water here. It’s better to go together.”

“....Alright.”

At Aisha’s suggestion, Rena got up from her seat as if she didn’t have much appetite in the first place. The first words Rena spoke after sitting down in the dinner table was this, she wasn’t the usual Rena. Eve and Ara also quietly followed Aisha.

“Angkor, wash the dishes after.”

After Aisha’s words, a silence descended upon the dinner table. It was obvious because only Elsword and Add was left.

Well...no one said anything even when everyone was sitting together.

“.....Tch.”

Add dropped his spoon in displeasure. He really didn’t like this. Elsword had already put down his fork long ago and was breathing thinly.

Add looked at Elsword who looked like he had become a statue then frowned.

Why was everyone acting so unsightly? It was an atmosphere as if someone amongst them had died. Well, many of them did die in the other timelines but weren’t they all alive right now? Of course, Add was also stifled, dejected and couldn’t think of anything about the future after he had faced Elesis.

But was there any need for others to be like this as well? Weren’t the El Search Party composed of bunch of softies in the first place? Why were they acting like the world had ended from mere something like this?

“Big Brother.”

He realized a moment later that Elsword had called him. When Add didn’t answer, Elsword called quietly again.

“Big Brother Add.”

“.....What?”

He didn’t feel like answering but it was even more difficult ignore. Elsword had opened his mouth for the first time after they had fought Elesis. Well he could have talked about many things with Eve before..... But chance of that was small considering how Eve wasn’t saying anything as well.

“We lost.”

“.....Yes.”

He didn’t have to ask what they had lost to. Elsword’s body shook from the shame and feeling of defeat towards himself. He trailed his words almost like a groan.

“.....I hate myself for thinking that I’m just glad to be alive.”

This was an annoying thing to hear for Add, but he didn’t feel like threatening Elsword to stop. He could sense Elsword’s pain, his self-depreciating rage.

“I finally met Big Sister. I was able to fight.....because you told me. But we lost.”

“.....Yes.”

Elsword’s back shook thinly.

Elsword had realized how far the sun that he thought he could finally grasp in his hand, how far Elesis’ back that looked like he could reach if he just stretched out his hand a bit further actually was and was despairing.

“.....I’m sorry.”

“.....”

Add felt furiously annoyed but he still couldn’t hit Elsword. Add didn’t know where to direct the fist that he had held up. He was actually planning to strike Elsword’s head once but that would only hurt his hand.

“I’m sorry for putting everyone in danger. If only I didn’t hesitate in the end.....”

“Stop talking. It’s annoying to listen to.”

A sharp voice, Add's emotions were contained in his voice. He could tell what Elsword with his head drooped down was regretting about, the reason why his knees were shaking.

If Elsword had struck down Elesis immediately, then maybe Elesis wouldn't have gotten any chance to reveal her true skills. Then there shouldn't have been any danger of the El Search Party getting annihilated. Aisha's intervention was truly unexpected; it was basically a rescue that came from the heavens.

Elsword was blaming himself for putting everyone else in danger because of his hesitation.

"Stop talking."

Unlike the forceful words Add spoke, his voice was soft to the point where it surprised Add himself. His fist had loosened before he knew it. His hand was patting Elsword's head.

Add pretended that he didn't know anything, pretended that he couldn't hear anything as he looked forwards.

How could he blame someone who was apologizing for not being able to strike down someone most precious to him with his own hands? Add put aside all the bad emotions, all the bad memories of Elsword from the past and bitterly moved his hands.

He couldn't blame this guy who was crying in regret and self-depreciation.

"That's enough."

".....I'm sorry."

As a man himself, he had to pretend that he couldn't see these tears filled with regret.

Deep into the night, Add confirmed that Elsword was sleeping then carefully raised himself and left the room. He couldn't sleep at all because he couldn't settle his feelings.

Add stopped in front of a room's door that he had kept in his mind beforehand and exhaled deeply. He had no choice but to try.

Add made his decision then opened the door and entered the room. But unlike his expectations, the room's owner, Aisha was sitting pompously on her chair with her chin resting on top of her hands. She hadn't changed her clothes despite how it was deep into the night and was staring quietly at Add standing on the doorsill.

It was as if she had known Add would come to meet her.

"Coming into a lady's room without a knock this late at night? There's no worse discourtesy. I'll turn into a frog if you do this one more time."

“Cooperate.”

“I’m not changing my decision. This is the last time I’ll help you guys. Shouldn’t you be glad just from the fact that I’ve kept the Velder Liberation army safe?”

She was a powerful magician that even made Elesis back off. Add would be no match for her if he ended up fighting her.

But he couldn’t avoid the things he had to say just because of their differences in strength.

“I’m not asking you to use your magic to do something. I don’t even expect you to. Of course.....I’d be thankful if you did.”

Add quickly thought and added to his words. It would be a lame thing to do, but if Aisha decided to help them, he could raise both of his arms and welcome her with cheers.

“Then what do you want me to help with?”

“You must have seen already during the dinner today, everyone is a mess right now. We’ll lose even fights we can win.”

They already lost to Elesis. Then what should they do next? Just because Rena, Ara, Elsword and Eve were depressed, Add couldn’t afford to be the same.

Let those softies do whatever they want. Coming up with the El Search Party’s strategies and plans was Add’s task.

He didn’t even need to be shy about it.

“You want me to help you with cheering them up? Why should I do that?”

“Didn’t you bring us here for that purpose?”

Add snorted. When Aisha made an expression as if she was saying ‘Oh would you look at this guy?’, Add didn’t hesitate as he explained.

“If we the El Search Party were meaningless existence to you, then there wouldn’t be any reason for you to come personally to stop Elesis. Since that goes against the restriction you talked about. On the contrary, you were interested in us enough to the point where you risked your own restriction to come and keep us alive.”

“.....”

“You already knew Elsword and Rena’s names.”

She must have had a way to know since she was a magician. Add laid out the facts he could think of then gave his conclusion.

“Aren’t you trying to have us defeat the Demons? Otherwise, there wouldn’t be any reason for you to go out of your way to save us and even provide us with a meal.”

It was a reason that everyone hadn’t thought of because they were so caught up in their defeat from Elesis. But Add was able to think of this obvious question because he was slightly more calm minded than the rest.

What was the reason for such a big shot magician like Aisha, who was probably the most powerful magician in history, to personally save the El Search Party then even provide them with lodging and meal? She wouldn’t suddenly show good will towards them when they had never met each other before. She probably had something she wanted from them.

“Am I wrong?”

“It’s not a correct answer....But should I say it’s not wrong either?”

Aisha made a slightly impressed smile then got up from her chair. Aisha faced Add and declared with a confident pose by putting her hands on her waist.

“Well, fine. Then I might as well cooperate up to a certain extent. Of course, we’ll do this my way. I won’t take any objections.”

“....”

“You do as I say. You don’t have any objections right?”

I’m trying to do something. There’s no way someone who will object to my methods can exist right? Can I get rid of that person if they exist?It was a smile only a person with this kind of mindset could make.

“F....fine.”

It felt like he got caught on a leash when he had originally come to negotiate. But he didn’t want to look weak after coming this far.

Also, Add generally agreed with the plan that Aisha presented to him. Aisha spoke fluently as if she had already planned this beforehand.

Aisha finished the conversation which was actually a notification rather than a discussion.

“Also, make sure to knock next time. Aren’t you lacking delicacy when dealing with girls? No wonder why, the only guy around you is....”

Aisha narrowed her eyes then clicked her tongue. It looked like she had recalled something unpleasant.

“Alright, I’m going to sleep now so go back. Ask Angkor if you want some late night snacks.”

Aisha spoke then grabbed Angkor that was flying around her then threw it towards Add. Angkor came flying with a low scream then flapped its wings as it flew around Add. Judging by its miserable expression..... It must get overworked by Aisha with various tasks.

Well should I go back now then? Add left the room without saying any parting words then closed the door. Sigh came out of his mouth as the tension eased.

“I don’t like this.”

Negotiations while in a disadvantageous position never goes well. But only person who could take care of this kind of task in their group was him. Well Rena possibly could, but she was way too trusting towards people and goodhearted.....and she was feeling dejected right now.

“Just why is everyone feeling so dejected.....?”

“It’s a sad story.”

Add was so shocked to the point where he almost fainted from a voice that abruptly came from beside him. When he looked carefully across the corridor, a shadow was leaning its back against the corridor’s wall. A dim silhouette shown by the moonlight, you could tell who it was from the blinding white hair.

“You now don’t even sleep at night and pop out?”

“Ara is completely asleep. And I slept during the day.”

It was night’s Eun who had exchanged positions with day’s Ara. When Eun’s face was revealed as she approached, Angkor who had been floating around Add got surprised and dove into Add’s chest.

“Did your talk with Aisha go well?”

“You already look like you know everything. Do I have to explain?”

Eun opened her eyes narrowly when Add replied sarcastically.

“My, boy seems quite upset. What is boy upset about? I was actually in the middle of being quite impressed by boy’s bold actions.”

“.....”

Add knew why he was upset, why they all had a bitter taste in their mouths.

Sense of defeat from Elesis? Sense of despair? Add had already experienced that disgustingly a lot during his fight in Elder. Of course, it was begrudging that Elesis was an extremely mighty existence, an existence that they couldn’t surpass as they were now.....But wasn’t this anything new?

How mighty did Shadow Master seem when he encountered it for the first time in Elder? Add was defeated in that fight and wasn't able to save Eve. On the other hand, everyone had survived through this fight with Elesis.

He didn't like how they were all lost in a sense of dejection. He couldn't leave this be.

"Just telling them to be glad that they were able to survive is such a cruel thing to tell them. Of course, it might actually be true considering Elly's skills.... But it's difficult to come to terms with that on one's own."

Add gave up thinking when Eun spoke as if she had seen through all his inner thoughts. Eun was smiling voluptuously as she looked outside beyond the window to look up at the moon hanging in the night sky.

"Shouldn't you have come to me first for discussions like this? Why are you asking for help from a magician you've never met before? Boy has quite a harsh side to him sometimes."

"It's was not a discussion. I'm getting her to cooperate."

Add drew the line as if he was telling Eun to stop saying something strange. This wasn't the first day Eun was acting like this, but she felt displeasing to him to the core right now.

"No, it's because I really cannot understand. Wouldn't this moment where everyone is discouraged the moment where boy could secretly achieve his desires? Wouldn't it be quite possible to make Eve look around if you soothe her carefully right now?"

"Hmph."

It's not like he hadn't thought about this. No matter how Eve had declared one-sidedly that they were strangers after this mission, that was before they had fought Elesis.

It wouldn't be hard to earn some points if he carefully soothed Eve who should be dwelling in helplessness and sense of defeat.

"That's not my way."

"Then what is the boy's way?"

"Kukukuk, you'll find out later."

Add let out an exaggerated laugh in order to block Eun's question.

Well, it was true that he didn't like this situation. People that had been always boisterously talking with each other all now had a gloomy face and was silent as if they had become mutes.....Being amongst them strangely made his insides boil up.

Maybe it was a feeling like, how someone who had always been annoyed by their family's happy flower filled atmosphere.....then couldn't stand around and watch when it suddenly became a funeral atmosphere? It wasn't just this. In Add's point of view, you couldn't technically say that this fight with Elesis was a defeat.

Add's initial objective was to protect Eve from getting destroyed by the demons. Then additional objectives that were added during his fight with Elesis were to make sure that Rena and Elsword didn't die either.

All of those had been accomplished. Except for the fact that they thought they could almost defeat Elesis but it wasn't true at all.

Although Add was quite surprised that Elesis hadn't shown her true skills up till that moment, and annoyed at his own miscalculations.....this wasn't a defeat. He had at least accomplished his goals.

"Well fine, I'm also quite anticipating this so I'll play along."

Eun was focusing on pulling Angkor's ears as she made a beaming smile. It was a very attractive smile but Add didn't even give an eye and walked past her.

"Just don't get in the way and ruin it."

"How can I think of such things when boy is worrying so much for the sake of others?"

Add replied bluntly to her teasing tone.

"I just don't like this. That's all."

As Add went back to his room leaving Eun behind, he organized his mind.

Alright, let's say there's this somewhat dislikable sculpture. At first, he thought that it looked ridiculous. But as he carried it around with him because of some circumstances, and as he saw and saw it again, he discovered in some point, that there was some good parts about it. It's unexpectedly not too bad; he had even come to think this way. It was to the point where he thought, well, I could compromise to bear and carry it around with me for longer.

But what happens if that sculpture was damaged not because of him but by someone else's hands? Who was it that had carried around that sculpture all this time? It was obvious to get annoyed when the sculpture got crumpled by some random person that popped out of nowhere.

"It's really displeasing."

It was a sculpture that was destined to be shattered. The other members would all become his enemies the moment when Add steals the Core that's basically Eve's life. All the smiles and overly

soft kindness he had seen before would disappear and they'd shake in anger as they point their weapons at him.

Then wouldn't it be better to have the other members continue to dwell in despair like this? That was the correct way to think when you considered in terms of gains and losses.....but Add was already beyond the point of considering such things.

His obsession for the sculpture was transcending his calculations. Although he knew that it wasn't a very profitable thing to do, he was so annoyed right now that he couldn't stand it.

"In the best possible moment....with my own hands."

Add stopped his steps and clenched his fists.

That's right, the moment when Eve turns around to look at him, during the moment when the El Search Party are caring for each other with overly soft hearts like they always do..... That's when Add will achieve his goal.

He had to teach those overly soft hearted fools the bitter taste of the world. Shouldn't they then live with proper senses after Add goes back to the past? You don't trust other people so blindly. You don't open your heart to someone so blindly. They'll realize this obvious truth all too late.

"Kukukuk."

This was the future Add had to achieve. His current actions were just him hiding his claws and fangs in order to achieve this final goal.

Add engraved on his own heart again.

Do not forget.

He needs Eve's Core in order to go back to the past where he's from. The El Search Party will be demolished the moment Add achieves his goal.

".....Even if it breaks, I'll break it myself."

He couldn't let somebody else leave a scratch on it.

4. To the next

Midday. After finishing lunch, Add stood on the beach only wearing shorts. Although the correct term wasn't actually shorts.

"It's apparently called a swimsuit."

"It's rather comfortable."

Elsword standing beside him lookrf intrigued as he tried pulling on the swimsuit he was wearing. His expression was still gloomy but it looked like his feelings settled a bit after sleeping.

"Why did you tell me come out wearing this?"

"There's no problem swimming in the sea if you wear that. I heard that it's a clothing made for that purpose in the first place."

"Oh, really? So they can get wet?"

Elsword quickly lowered his body to get some sea water on his swimsuit then exclaimed.

"I heard there were clothes for swimming but I didn't know there were ones that stick so close to your body."

"I only found out yesterday myself."

Swimsuits that Aisha had brought out were very surprising. They were indeed a collection befitting of a magician.

"So you called me out here to swim and play with me?"

Elsword asked calmly as he splashed sea water on his body. He had realized that Add didn't call him out without any reason at all. Good, because the story will go faster this way.

"You're stupid."

"....."

"You're stupid but you have a use. So I'll make use of you."

Elsword looked at Add with a not too angry expression for a while then he sighed.

"From how I see it, Big Brother Add is more stupid....."

"What?"

No, what is the world?! To actually hear that I'm stupid from Elsword?! Add's face got distorted in fury.

He couldn't accept this. Even if Elrios was to be destroyed right now, he didn't want that kind of evaluation, at least from Elsword!

"Aren't I right? If you want me to do something for you then you should just ask normally. Do you really need to say it like that?"

"....."

Add was about to burst out in temper but stopped to think for a moment when his conversational skills got pointed out. So that probably means he should try to manipulate Elsword using smooth words....But Add had never done those kinds of things before.

He would have rather threatened him with a display of skill.

"I don't mind anyways. So, what should I do? I'll do it since it's Big Brother Add that's asking."

"I'm not asking you. I'm ordering you."

Add spoke haughtily. Elsword nodded with an expression as if he was looking at someone really pitiable. Then he sighed.

"This is why you get in fights with Eve."

".....What?"

Add ended up showing a startled reaction due to the unexpected name that popped up.

Add and Eve had almost never talked with each other after the incident where Eve told Add let's never see each other again after the business with Elesis was over. Well they didn't have any leisure to talk after because everyone was so soaked in sense of defeat....but even if they had some time, Add didn't have any idea how he should proceed with the conversation.

Leaving that aside, how did Elsword know that they were in a cold war like state? Eve should be the type that hides these kinds of things.

"Because Eve keeps changing the topic whenever your name comes up. It's bothersome for me too so make up with her already."

"Kukukuk, we're not kids. Since when did we fight?"

Add hid his inner thoughts for now and let out a laugh. Although Elsword still didn't withdraw his gaze that looked like he was looking at someone really pitiable.

“I explained it well to Eve. But Eve is also very stubborn so she probably won’t talk first. So try better on your side. Call me if it gets difficult.”

“.....That’s a needless meddling.”

Add replied bluntly as he abruptly turned his head away. Getting Eve’s hostility due to painting over time was within his calculations. He just hadn’t thought of how to deal with it after.

He could somewhat bring out some words of apology due to being harshly(?) educated by Ara..... But it didn’t seem that would be enough this time.

Elsword silently watched Add then changed the topic back to normal.

“So what should I help with?”

“Swim.”

“Alright, after that?”

Add put strength in his voice as he spoke.

“Swim enjoyably. So it looks fun.”

“.....Is that it?”

“It just has to look stupidly fun. Do it now.”

When Add urged, Elsword scratched his head then asked.

“Let me just ask one thing, why do I have to swim? Couldn’t you swim instead?”

“I’ve never swam before. Also getting inside water will only make me cold.”

When Add crossed his arms and insisted to ask if something was wrong, Elsword laughed slightly.

“Alright. Then I’ll go swim your part as well.”

Elsword replied energetically then immediately jumped into the sea. He refreshingly cut across the approaching waves.

The scene refreshed your heart just by watching.

“That should be good enough.....”

Well, Elsword’s swimming did look extremely enjoyable even for Add who was an indoors person. His form as he cuts across the waves so clear that you could see the sea floor, this should attract everyone’s attention.

Then he heard footsteps walking on the sand.

“Oh, you were here before us.”

“Elsword probably didn’t even warm up. Wasn’t warming up essential for humans before going into the water?”

“Is, is it really okay to wear something like this?”

Add heard the voices coming from behind him and turned around then got startled a bit. Eve, Rena and Ara were approaching in their swimsuits. Everyone had an outfit that revealed their figures well.

Especially, seeing Eve with her perfect design revealed made his head dizzy. Add deliberately turned his gaze around and gave his evaluation.

“Hmm, good. There’s no navel.”

“Umm, Add? I’d like you to refrain from saying those kinds of things.”

Rena’s voice sounded soft on the surface but it contained a stern message telling Add that she won’t allow any objections. Add quietly shut his mouth when Rena got serious from something he said without any thought.

Rena’s gentle reprimanding gaze, but it was kind of difficult to say something to apologize to Eve right now. Add’s gaze as he struggled in his thoughts remained behind Rena.

“Why are you hiding?”

“.....I, I’m not sure.”

Ara looked like she was embarrassed of her swimsuit attire and was hiding behind Rena. She looked like she wouldn’t dare come out. She had been so enjoyably running along the beach yesterday and now she was reacting like this.

The plan will go wrong if Ara is acting like this. But the problem was.Add didn’t have enough data on how to handle this kind of situation.

“Come on, Ara. Don’t be so embarrassed.”

Rena tried persuading Ara.

“.....It’s my first time showing this kind of appearance to a male person other than Elder Brother.”

“Then I’ll leave. You guys play much as you want by yourselves.”

Add’s objective wasn’t to enjoy playing in the water himself anyways. The mood should go up more if Ara acted like she normally did.

Add was about to turn around without any regrets when Ara urgently stopped him.

“Ah, No you can’t! There’s no need for Mr.Add to be like that when I’m the one who lacks training.”

“.....You’re making me waste my time.”

Add spoke stiffly but still stopped. Rena smiled as she pulled Ara’s hand in towards her. But when Ara tried to resist and didn’t come out, Rena mischievously embraced Ara in her arms.

“M, Ms Rena! Please let me go!”

“Nope, you can’t hide when you’ve got to dress up so prettily right?”

After she got caught by Rena, Ara realized it was too late and gave up resisting. Ara’s face turned bright red as she nervously looked around at Rena, Eve then finally Add.

“Umm, d, don’t I look strange?”

“She’s very pretty, right?”

Eve nodded when Rena asked for agreements. Add tried to ignore but couldn’t continue to ignore anymore when Ara sent him a desperate gaze as if she was waiting for an answer. Add went into his thoughts.

Red bikini did go well with Ara’s white skin. Not only that, Ara’s face looked young despite her age but her body was quite mature. Well, she still didn’t compare to Rena but she did boast outstanding proportions.

Add made his academic evaluation then nodded.

“Well, I’ll compliment you at least for your appearance.”

“Thank you very much.”

It seemed Ara could finally ease her mind. Her face brightened as she smiled sweetly and Rena patted Ara’s head as if she was glad for her.

And Eve stared at Add with an extremely cold gaze.

“Are all human males’ vocabulary this lame?”

“Don’t be like that, Add put in his efforts too.”

“....”

Why is she reacting like that when he actually managed to give a compliment? Add was at a loss for words as he stared at Eve, but she turned her head right away to avoid his gaze.



“She’s very pretty, right?”

He got completely ignored. But Add didn't yield and brought up the main topic.

"We came to a sea for a change. Why don't you all enjoy yourselves?"

"What are you planning?"

Eve replied coldly. She was already wearing a swimsuit but her expression seemed to say she only did so because Rena had requested her to.

"Come on, don't be like that. Let's go in together Eve."

"Rena, stop pulling me. You should also warm up before you go in.....Ah!"

Eve had been getting pulled towards the ocean by Rena. But she must have made a wrong step as she slightly staggered. Just when Add was about to fly his Dynamos towards her, Ara quickly came running splashing through the water and grabbed Eve before she fell.

".....Thank you, Ara Haan. But the floor here isn't very stable. Be careful."

"No problemOwie!"

Ara must have stepped on something because she fell on her bottom. Eve questioningly looked at Ara who had instantly become drenched all the way up to her hair. Eve then sighed as she held out her hand. Ara who had been rubbing her bottom smiled joyfully as she grabbed Eve's hand and stood up.

Add watched this scene and carefully brought his Dynamos back to where they were. A voice came from behind him.

"There, it roughly turned out as we planned right?"

Aisha also had a swimsuit on like the other girls as she stood beside Add. Add gazed piercingly at Aisha's chest zone.

Aisha got dumbstruck as she slowly covered her chest with her arms then took a step back.

".....Isn't the stare way too open?"

"I'm not interested."

Add finished his observation then snorted as he turned his head around without any regrets. Aisha's expression turned extremely unpleasant when he did this.

".....I don't think it won't be a crime even if I smashed you down the ocean trench right now."

"I only made an academic comparison. Forget it."

"Don't you know that's even ruder? How discourteous....."

Aisha clicked her tongue as she expressed her displeasure. But Add was really deep inside his thoughts right now. Aisha and Eve had similar chest sizes. So then why couldn't he avert his gaze from Eve?

".....Hmm."

If you discarded the subjectivity, it was quite obvious for males to be conscious of female's bodies. Although Add wasn't too interested, and although he got into various troublesome situations because of Eun's harassments, that was not related to this.

Of course, Eve was a Nasod. But she was indeed a female if you considered her gender. Just like how if you saw a drawing of a female then you won't consider the drawing as a male, all intelligent life forms were designed to recognise each other's genders by their appearances.

Add deliberated as he made his conclusion.

".....Is it because of the difference in designs?"

That's right; there were differences in designs in Aisha and Eve's swimsuits. Add had never paid attention to girls' attires but who knows? There could be some hidden preference that he had never realized.

He couldn't avert his gaze from Eve because a taste that he hadn't been conscious of before had come up!

Good, that's a perfect explanation!

"Are you only going to watch from the back? I thought you wanted to make them cheer up. Then shouldn't you also join in and swim together with them?"

"Hmph, there's no reason for me to step up. Kukukuk."

"Ah, come to think of it. You.....couldn't swim right?"

Add unknowingly winced at her low voice. Aisha was smiling brightly.

It was an extremely ominous smile. Add unknowingly stuttered his words as he stepped back.

"W, wait."

"The sin of looking at a lady rudely is a big one."

When Aisha swung her arm lightly as she spoke this, a cyclone appeared near Add. No way. She can even perform magic with bare hand? Putting that aside.....this cyclone was surrounding Add's body and trying to drag him towards the sea!!

Add got startled and activated his Dynamos. He successfully escaped the cyclone's radius by using a short distance space warp. Aisha opened her mouth in surprise slightly from this feat then she smiled violently right after.

"If it's a contest of strength, I'll accept it any time. How long do you think you can avoid using space warp? Aren't you tired of using such an old method?"

"Uh....."

It felt like he had lighted a wick of a bomb. This purple magician showed good will toward the El Search Party but she seemed to have a very strong sense of not wanting to acknowledge defeat. When Add dodged, she immediately thinks 'Oh, you actually dared to dodge?'.

What an emotional magician. Anyways, when Aisha swung her arm again, four cyclones got created and prepared to jump at Add.

"All you had to do was willingly fall into the sea. Do I have to really bring you there myself?"

"Come to think of it, you appeared using space warp before. How's that possible?"

"That's because I'm Dimension Princess. Didn't Big Sister Elly call me that? I told her to call me Void Princess but the name stuck because demons kept calling me that on their own. Well, I gave up trying to fix it in the end."

Aisha was acting like it was nothing special but this wasn't something Add could just pass over.

"Distance should be possible if you calculated precisely. But you could also move other people. Furthermore, you could move us whom you've met only yesterday without any consent. How is that possible?"

"That's because life forms or not, aren't they all just collections of information? In science they call this basic unit of information the atom or the particle, and in magic they have a vintage name for it called the fragment of a soul. But in the end, they are both same in that clumps of information come together to become an entity."

It seemed that Aisha had forgotten the situation right now and started explaining with a simple tone. She spoke smoothly in an easy way to understand like a teacher who was asked a question from her student.

"For example, that Void Impact you use. Doesn't it shake the space, that is, you change a constant into a variable. Then you use the self restoration property of that variable trying to go back into a constant to cause a shockwave. Am I right?"

“.....”

Add could only nod when the key factor of his skill got analysed so quickly. He had figured Aisha had been observing the El Search Party since long ago. But he hadn't known that she knew not only their names and achievements but their skills in such a detail as well.

“Oh, and Void Double Impact. You're using it in a stupid way again. Why are you using parallel calculations when you can just use serial connection?”

“.....What do you mean?”

“Here, look at this.”

Aisha waved her hand to clear away the cyclones as if she had just remembered something. Then she started to write down a formula on the sand.

It was a calculative formula for Add's Void Impact.

“.....How do you know this?”

“Is it so strange for Void Princess to explain about Void Impact?”

He was about to faint from surprise. How did this magician know so much in depth about everything?

Aisha didn't mind Add's surprised face and continued to explain in detail.

“Right now, you delete the load prevention formula here, and then reduce the casting time by firing a Void Impact two times as you remove the safety mechanism right? That's why you are getting feedbacks on your body. You're losing out because you're using it with the mindset of using Void Impact two times.”

“.....Then what's the proper way?”

“Combine the two into a single calculation. Don't calculate two times. Instead, fire it as if you're firing a one large Void Impact in two slices. The original values will still change the moment when space coordinate's constant turns into a variable. So there shouldn't be any problems if you calculated beforehand how the first Void Impact would change the original constant.

The main point in Aisha's explanation was to throw the first punch while keeping in mind how to throw the second punch.

She was even writing up the follow up formulas and the concise load prevention formulas as well..... Even in Add's eyes, it was a formula that had more output and stability than the one he had been using before.

“.....”

Add didn't want to admit it, but he felt a sense of defeat as an engineer. Add had a huge pride in his Dynamo and battle methods.

But they were being completely treated like a child's play in front of Aisha.

Aisha finished explaining then got up as she tapped the dirt off her hands. Then she burst out laughing after seeing Add's face.

"You look extremely vexed. That's unexpected. I didn't think you knew how to make such a face."

".....I'll thank you for your assistance."

With his pride hurt, Add responded while suppressing his feelings. He had thought he was the smartest in the world, but for there to be someone that was above him... Separate from how Aisha was a powerful magician, Add was extremely vexed that he got treated like a kid in his own field of expertise.

"Well, I'd like to brag that I, the Great Aisha figured this out all on my own because I'm smart. But....that's not actually true."

"What do you mean?"

Aisha smiled bitterly.

"This isn't a formula that I came up with. It was taught to me. I was able to awaken because I was taught not only this, but many other things as well. That's why I started to be called Dimension Princess by the demons and even became number 1 in the demons' list for dangerous individuals."

"....."

"I told you this double formula because it will be of help to you from now on. Don't thank me and thank the diabolic foregoer person that taught me this instead. Hmm, should I just shorten that description into a diabolic person because it's too long?"

This simultaneous calculation, Double, wasn't something that was pioneered but instead was a thing that someone else had already achieved? And that person is Aisha's mentor?

There was someone so exceptional in this age?

"Who is this? Can you let me meet this person?"

If it was someone even Aisha would seek knowledge from, Add could learn endless amounts of things from this person. When Add asked greedily from his lust for knowledge, Aisha lightly shook her head.

When Add was about to beg again, Aisha smiled prettily.

“By the way, aren’t we forgetting something?”

“Hm?”

The wave that just came into the shore erased half of the formula that Aisha had written. But it didn’t matter. Add had already understood and memorized everything soon as he heard and saw it.

Aisha lightly waved her hand as she smiled.

“Okay, go flying!”

Cyclones got created again.

He’s falling.

“Uwaaaaaaaah!!”

Add was freefalling as he screamed. He quickly moved his Dynamos but the fall speed was too fast. Water’s surface was right in front of him.

But Add clenched his teeth as he barely managed to stop a few centimeters above the water’s surface. Add breathed out a sigh of relief.

Trying to plunge someone into water for real. What a violent girl.

“Phew.....”

“M, Mr.Add!! Watch out!”

In that moment, a scream came from behind Add’s back and he thoughtlessly tried turn around. But Add was pushed up by a powerful impact. The feeling of getting rammed by an enraged bull, Add couldn’t breathe as his eyes started going dark. Add had fallen down so abruptly from the sky that Ara who had been running wasn’t able to dodge in time and had directly run into him.

Splash!!

Water splashed up irregularly as Ara and Add got lumped together and fell into the water. Add got completely drenched and muttered as he frowned.

Thankfully, this place was only a shin deep so he didn’t need to flutter.

“Look in front of you when.....”

“.....”

Add was muttering then he realized the situation and couldn't say anything. Ara's face was way too close. It had turned into a position where Ara was pressing down on Add as they fell into the water together.

"Uh...."

"....."

Add didn't know what he should say. He quickly turned his head around to avert facing Ara directly. Then Ara looked like she abruptly came to her senses then removed her hands from Add's shoulders as she stood up.

"U, umm I'm sorry Mr.Add."

"I'm sorry for falling so suddenly too...."

Add apologized unlike himself. The position just now was a bit startling but he felt like nothing good would come from bringing up this incident anymore.

He should just talk naturally as usual. As if nothing happened....

"Uh, umm..... I'll go running for a bit!"

"....."

But that was only possible with the other person's cooperation. Ara whose face had turned red looked like she didn't know what to do then she suddenly shut her eyes and ran away.

Although Add's eyes couldn't quite believe it, she was literally running on the water's surface. Ara was fast as the wind when she started running, she was kicking the surface with her right foot just before her left foot sank.

Well, she could also run across the air so it wasn't surprising.... But it seemed there was a limit because she was slowly sinking into the water. Add saw Ara continue to run to the point where she sank down up to her neck then turned his head around with a sigh.

"So meaningless...."

"I ended up seeing everything."

Add winced at the voice that came from behind him but managed to look back with a blunt gaze. Rena was facing him while smiling.

"If you saw, then you should know that it was an accident."

"Yes, I know."

".....I told you it was an accident."

Add frowned and spoke once more when Rena continued to smile warmly. It didn't feel too good to get mixed up with that scatterbrain. But Rena changed the topic with a tone as if she didn't care too much.

"Since we came to the sea, let's swim together Add."

"I don't feel like it."

He actually didn't know how to. But it felt like things would get annoying if he revealed this. Rena would probably try to care for Add by telling him something like she'll teach him how to swim.

Although her meddling was tiresome, it didn't feel bad....

"You should relax too."

"Yea, since Add did this much for our sake."

".....That magician over there had a change of whim. I don't know anything."

Rena nodded when Add sulked and objected.

"Yes, since Add went out of his way to even ask other people."

"....."

It was no use no matter what he said. But Add didn't speak anymore when Rena approached him with light steps.

Rena was truly beautiful. Her long light green hair and body that drew feminine curves, he would have believed that she was a sculpture if he hadn't seen her walk and speak.

She became a beautiful piece of painting even though all she was currently doing was standing with her forelegs slightly inside the water. He didn't want to make any careless dent in this painting.

"I organized my thoughts a bit as well. Let's talk again during the evening. So let's forget everything for now and play."

Rena offered with a smile as if she knew what Add was worried about. It was difficult to refuse when she asked like this.

Just when Add was about to reluctantly agree, Rena suddenly looked behind her.

"Ah, I asked Eve to swim together as well but she refused. Wouldn't she be bored by herself?"

"....."

"Why don't you go and keep her company?"

Just as she said, Eve sat alone on the sand and was quietly watching Elsword who was swimming far away. When Add realized why Rena was doing this and frowned, Rena also added an excuse.

“Since I’ll have to call Elsword if Add refuses. But Elsword is swimming so cheerfully right now.”

Just like Rena said, Elsword was now busily racing with Ara. He was really having fun although Add had pushed him to do it.

“What will you do?”

“.....I’ll go.”

Add didn’t like how Rena was smiling but he walked towards Eve regardless. He had to do this eventually anyways.

Add walked out of the sea and was about to talk to Eve who was sitting on the sand with her knees joined together. But he paused. Rena did push him to come, and it was something he had to do eventually. But he just couldn’t think of how to start this conversation.

Then Eve raised her head and they ended up making eye contact.

Add instinctively realized he couldn’t go back or stall now. He sat down beside Eve naturally as possible, while hoping it looked as natural as possible.

“.....”

It was at least encouraging to see that Eve didn’t show any reaction of standing up. They sat side by side for a moment and looked across the horizon. But when the silence continued, Add started to open his mouth.

“I’m telling you now but....”

“I cannot accept it.”

Add looked beside him after getting his words snatched up. Eve was still looking at Elsword who was swimming energetically.

“I get why you did such a thing. Elsword and Rena also told me. But I still cannot accept your method.”

“.....”

Eve was saying that she found out why Add had spoken harsh words to Elsword before the day that they fought Elesis. But she was still being stubborn by saying that she had no intention to apologize.

Well, it didn’t matter since Add had never expected her to understand in the first place.

“Then what are you going to do from now on? Elsword won’t stand still after knowing Elesis’ whereabouts. Are you two planning to go back to fight Elesis?”

“.....”

It became a pushy tone as Add started talking, but this was a problem that had to be resolved. The El Search Party lost to Elesis.

What should they do now? What were Eve’s thoughts on this?”

“What do you plan to do now, Add?”

“.....It won’t be a problem long as I don’t cross paths with you guys right?”

He hadn’t intended it, but it became a sarcastic tone.

Add hadn’t realized it himself, but what Eve said about never seeing each other’s face again..... Must have become a lump in his heart and remained there ever since.

Who did she think he was doing this for? He even painted over time in order to fight...

It was illogical to ask Eve to understand in the first place, but he couldn’t prevent his emotions from twisting.

“Don’t worry. I’ll do my best to not show even a single speck of my hair to you.”

“What I said that time was.....”

Eve seemed to hesitate for a moment then suddenly lowered her head. She hid her expression by covering her face slightly between her knees.

“I made an error in my judgement. I’m sorry, Add.”

“.....”

Add’s heart that wanted to continue being sarcastic got wiped clean. His blood pressure went up at this unexpected words and he couldn’t even make any judgements anymore.

No, why was his blood pressure going up? But his face turning red was clearly a symptom of high blood pressure right?

For Eve to apologize, and so honestly too, not for any other reason..... She was purely apologizing for saying harsh words to him.

Without Elsword or anything! Purely! To him!!

“I apologize for saying something so harsh.”

“.....Uh, yea.”

Add was so surprised that he couldn't even answer properly. He repeatedly opened and closed his mouth then scratched his head in frustration. He was an engineer, but his feelings couldn't be expressed logically right now.

For that pompous and prudish Eve to apologize this honestly. This was completely outside his calculations.

Every feeling that had been piled up within him disappeared and no thoughts came into his mind. But Add felt Eve move her eyes slightly to look at him so he hurriedly tried to reply with whatever words that came out of his mouth.

“I, I see. I'm glad you realized your mistake. As expected of the Queen of Nasods, you have a sufficient will of wanting to improve yourself. I should work harder from now on too. Kukuk.”

“I'm sorry if that offended you.”

“.....No, offended? Who said I was offended? Kukukukuk, there's no way a cold-minded engineer like me would care about a mere Nasod's mistake. Isn't that right?”

Add blabbered without knowing what he was saying. He didn't know what he was doing because his feelings of wanting this moment to continue and wanting this moment to end got mixed up from within his head.

He couldn't even tell if this place he was sitting on was the sand or the clouds.

“I realized later that you had put quite a bit of your own consideration into what you said.”

“.....”

Such an honest apology. Add closed his mouth shut after hearing these honest words.

Eve had never reacted even once like this before. He wanted to open his ears and remember every single word she spoke.

Since this kind of moment probably won't ever come again.

“Will you forgive my mistake?”

“.....Of course.”

Add had been looking straightly at Eve but he quickly turned his head forwards when Eve turned to look at him. Ara, Elsword and now Rena were swimming together but none of those came into his eyes.

“Thank you.”

“.....”

No way, he finally won. He finally achieved everything. Add unknowingly clenched his fists and screamed out a cheer inside his mind. Great, everything is perfect now.

He finally made Eve who only looked at Elsword turn around to look at him.

Then has the time finally come?

“.....”

Has the time to steal Eve’s Core come? Add’s face that had been startled by the success he hadn’t imagined slowly stiffened. Just when Add was slowly turning around to look at Eve, she murmured in a low voice.

“You spoke those harsh words because you were worried about Elsword as well. I can’t accept your method but those remarks were rather valuable.”

“Hey, wait.”

Words trying to stop her from talking came out unconsciously. But Eve calmly continued her words as if she hadn’t heard anything.

“I don’t know when the two of your relationships became like that, but let me make this one thing clear.”

“Hey.....”

He had so much he wanted to speak out but Eve didn’t even pretend to listen and spoke sternly as if there was nothing else in this world that was more important than this.

“I’m the one who got the request to become friends by Elsword first. Do not forget this.”

“.....Ah.”

His head was dizzy. Add couldn’t stand it anymore so he gave up sitting upright and dropped down on his back. Add covered his face with his arms and only exhaled absent-minded sighs.

What is the world? Isn't this a bit too harsh? It was to keep me in check? She's doing this right now so she can keep me in check?

"Is there any problems? Ask Elsword yourself if you are suspicious."

".....Kukukuk."

There were so many things that he didn't know what to point out first. Add felt so absent-minded that he only let out a laugh. Eve was right now.....thinking that Elsword and Add had become friendly with each other and she was being jealous!!

No, he could tell what kind of series of logic brought her to this conclusion. But isn't this a bit too much? Possessive desires amongst friends? I've been friendly with this guy but he's been recently playing with some other guy? Is that what this is? Is this really coming out right now? Isn't this way too harsh?

His brain could understand but his heart felt stifled and his sight was spinning so dizzily that he couldn't even breathe.

"Should I call Rena if you're not feeling well?"

When Add stayed down without saying anything in order to suppress his stifling heart, Eve tried placing her hand on Add's forehead.

Then all of various emotions that had been boiling up from within him disappeared as if they had all been lies.

"You don't seem to have any fever. Is there something else that's wrong?"

".....I'm just lying down because I'm tired."

"Then you should go back to the lodge and rest."

Add shot back bluntly to Eve's serene words.

"I don't know what might happen if I were to do that so I'll stay like this for now."

"?"

When Eve tried to pull back her hand as if she couldn't understand, Add grabbed her hand.

"Let's stay like this for a bit."

"Is this some new illness you get from being in the beach?"



“Let’s stay like this for a bit.”

“.....Yea.”

Eve looked like she couldn't comprehend when Add replied bluntly. But she didn't withdraw her hand. With his eyes closed and Eve's hand on top of his forehead, Add let out a long sigh.

Eve's misunderstanding. He was so dumbfounded after realizing what she had been thinking of that he couldn't even speak properly.

If it's like this, his plan to make Eve turn around to look at him.....would probably take much longer.

Well, it doesn't matter that way.

“Hmph.....”

It didn't feel bad right now at the least.

Eve stayed and guarded beside Add for a while then she got up from her spot when Elsword called. They must all be playing volleyball.

But Add didn't join in by saying he wasn't feeling well.

“Okay, here I come! Hiyah!”

Instead, Aisha had joined in and was displaying fancy skills. Appearing from the left, appearing from the right....she was hitting scary spikes by restlessly teleporting.

“.....Isn't that cheating?”

“We should limit the amount.”

They were playing far away enough that you couldn't even tell their expressions clearly, but Add could hear their conversations because he had sent one of the Dynamos.

Eve on the opposite team gave an overwhelmed reaction and even Elsword who was on the same team as Aisha gave a same reaction as Eve. But Rena was responding to Aisha's spikes easily as if they were no big deal. Well, even as how Add saw it, while Aisha's teleports were dizzy, it was merely a trick to distract the eyes. It might be useful for defense, but it wasn't a very effective maneuver for offense.

Aisha herself should know this as well since she's smart. It looked like she was merely running wild because she was having fun and wasn't doing this particularly because she wanted to win.

“She looks normal when you see her like this.”

Add sighed as he went over in his head the improved Void Impact that Aisha had taught him. If you followed her formula, not only Void Impact, but outputs of all the other skills that used space and shockwaves would improve greatly.

After being taught by Aisha, Add could confidently say that he became 1.5 times, no to exaggerate, even 2 times stronger. But even so....

“I don’t know.”

He couldn’t think of a way to defeat Elesis. They needed the entire El Search Party’s full efforts to even defeat the form before she transformed. He couldn’t even begin to imagine how powerful she became after she transformed.

“We can’t win right now.....”

No matter how much he repeated his calculations, this wasn’t the time to fight. When Add was putting his hand on his forehead and letting out a sigh, he could feel a presence beside him. He turned around to see Ara who had brought a sunbed and was opening it.

White hair, and cute twitching fox ears on top, it wasn’t Ara. But she didn’t have tails for some reason.

“What?”

When Add asked displeasingly, Eun looked around then slightly pulled on her swimsuit’s bottom piece to adjust its position. Add watched blankly at her finger’s movements then abruptly averted his gaze.

Eun didn’t mind Add’s reaction and smiled beamingly. She then stretched out her arms and legs as she laid down frontwards on the sunbed. Looking at how she covered her mouth with her hand as she yawned, she looked very leisurely.

“Everyone is playing, why doesn’t boy go join them as well?”

“Things that require me to move are tiresome. Also, what happened to your tail?”

“It gets heavy when it gets soaked in water. I’ll put it on right now if boy needs a pillow though.”

“Don’t make me laugh.”

Add instinctively let out an enraged voice. Then Eun who had been enjoying bathing in the sun opened one eye to look at Add.

“It looks like you are quite mad at me.”

It was obvious. According to Add’s deduction, Eun would have at least known about Elesis’ true abilities. That’s because....

“Didn’t you say that you’d trust me if you could win safely? I’d like boy to meekly open his heart to me now.”

He indeed did say something like that before. When Add stared coldly, Eun spoke as she smiled beamingly.

“Isn’t everyone safe? Boy’s objectives have been accomplished.”

“.....You didn’t come out even when Ara was in danger.”

“That was something Ara asked me separately. She said she wanted to handle much of the fight by herself as possible. I usually only lend my strength with Celestial Fox state.”

“I said, don’t make me laugh.”

When Add violently cut her off, Eun sighed then closed her eye.

“Getting so angry when we actually got to have a vacation for a change. Did boy develop a hobby for treating me with contempt?”

“About how Elesis wasn’t revealing her true abilities. You hid that from me even while I time traveled two times.”

“How can you say that? I might not have known. I’m telling you, it’s not like I.....”

“You would have at least known that. Why don’t you try recalling what you said?”

Add showed his teeth.

“Didn’t you say that you’d even take over Ara’s body and evacuate if her life was in danger? But you only watched even when Ara’s was in danger. That’s because fighting with Elesis’ 1st form wasn’t really dangerous.”

“.....”

“You would have expected that her 2nd form, where she released her true powers was the true danger. That we could somehow beat the 1st form but the 2nd form will be waiting for us right after, that if you really had to take over Ara’s body and evacuate, it’ll be because of the 2nd form.”

Add had thought from the start that they couldn’t even defeat the 1st form with just Ara’s strength alone. That’s why he thought he should bring Eun out instead.

The result was obvious after combining the fact that how Ara had decided to fight much as possible with her own strength and the Celestial Fox state’s mechanism where you could recover while fighting the enemy.

“That theory still has room for interpretations. I could have stayed back in order to improve Ara’s skills.”

“If you stepped up, there would have been numerous chances to defeat the 1st form much easily.”

Actually, Add wasn’t interrogating with a clear cut evidence either. He was basing this on circumstantial evidences. But what Eun said about how they weren’t guaranteed to defeat Elesis’ 1st form even if she had joined in was nonsense.

If Eun had helped as well, defeating 1st Elesis would have been much easier.

Thus, what Eun said about how she couldn’t grantee a victory can only be seen as her putting the 2nd form into her calculation as well.

“Didn’t you say it yourself? That we couldn’t guarantee a victory against Elesis even if you stepped up. But only two conclusions can come from this if you restrict Elesis’ abilities to only her 1st form. Either what you said about not being able to guarantee a victory was a lie, or you knew that the 2nd form was waiting for us.”

“.....”

Eun didn’t speak anymore. Add revealed all the rage he had withheld up till now.

“In the end, you knew that we would lose. That we could defeat the 1st form but would lose against the 2nd.....”

“According to the timespace coordinates, that form of Elly is called Crimson Avenger. It’s hard to understand when you’re speaking in terms of 1st and 2nd.”

“.....That means you only stood by and watched even though you knew that we’d be driven into danger!”

Add ignored the nonsense she spoke and exploded in anger. But Eun replied calmly to Add’s interrogation.

“So, is there any problem with that?”

“....”

Add got up from his spot immediately.

He had tried to avoid forceful confrontations with Eun so far, but it was difficult to restrain himself anymore. Electric currents started flowing through the Dynamos. He was going to fight today without any restraints since he also got a formula boost recently.

I’ll hang you upside down and make you beg for your life!! When Add enflamed his will to fight, Eun opened her eyes narrowly to look at him then moved her hands.

Just when Add was about to quickly move his Dynamos in response, the attack that Eun launched surpassed his imaginations.

Snap!

Her swimsuit's top piece, she had unhooked the back hook of the swimsuit that had been covering the breasts. Amidst the sound of electric currents, Add blinked while thinking if his hearing was mistaken.

Just what was she doing in this volatile situation?

"A mark would remain on the back if I tanned like this. It would be a bad thing to do to Ara."

".....Hey"

"Hmm? Why is boy standing like that? So you want to have a go without any restraints? Well, there's no reason not to play along with some anger venting."

"What are you doing?!"

Add got flustered and backed off when Eun tried to get up from the sunbed as she was now. But he backed off around two steps then got his cool-head back. He glared at Eun with displeasure and rage. Eun had gotten up barely to the point where it looked really dangerous and was smiling sluggishly while observing him with narrow eyes.

"You....."

"Is there any problems, boy?"

Eun was acting slyly as if she didn't know anything. But there was no way she actually didn't know. If he attacks Eun now....her upper body that's not wearing anything will get revealed.

No, why was someone who even has the skills escaping with this kind of shameful method? Add's blood boiled but he withdrew his Dynamos.

First of all, it was something he couldn't do to Ara. It was annoying to the point where he wanted to hang Eun upside down and pull out the hairs on her tail one by one. But he didn't have any particular grudge against Ara.

"That's enough, stop going so far with Ara's body."

"That's why I'm only moderately exaggerating the breasts. It's much more amazing if I do it properly."

"....."

Let's just stop talking. When Add displeasingly continued to glare, Eun laughed slyly as she nodded slightly.

"That's right, boy. Boy's assumptions are all correct. I knew beforehand that Elly hadn't released her true powers. Boy's judgemental ability in figuring this out just from couple circumstances and words passing by is quite surprising. It's as expected of a brain of the El Search Party."

"Stop playing innocent, why didn't you tell me beforehand?"

"Let me ask you instead, what would have changed if I told you?"

Eun withdrew her mischievousness then asked. Add was about to answer then paused.

"The result wouldn't have changed. Boy should already be feeling this as well. That no strategies will work on Elly's true abilities. That no matter how superior boy's brain is, no matter how many times boy challenged by rewinding time, that he wouldn't ever have been able to surpass that giant wall."

"...."

"Doesn't boy know down to his bones already? That's why you would have been tempted by the choice of joining the demons."

"I would have just made use of the demons if necessary."

Add answered bluntly but her indication was correct. Soon as Add witnessed Elesis' skills....he couldn't even think about how to handle her.

Others could do their best in their positions, but coming up with their plan was Add's task.

If the El Search Party loses, that's because Add had made an error in his plan.

"Damn...."

It had become like this even before he had realized. This was partly because Add's brain was superior, but it was also because he knew what would happen already. If Add wanted to prevent the undesirable future that was approaching them, it was correct for him to take the strategist role by coming up with plans and making the Search Party listen to his plans.

Wasn't it because the other members had unquestionably listened to Add's request that they could give up the diversionary tactic with the Velder Liberation army and focus on Elesis?

Although they still lost in the end.

".....Kugh."

Add felt vexed and rolled his hands up into fists. Just like Eun said, it wasn't something that would have changed even if he knew beforehand. At first, he was angry that Eun had kept her mouth shut despite knowing everything. But he had no choice but to accept it now.

Nothing would have changed.

"So there was no way for us to win against Elesis."

"At this point, yes."

Add raised his head. Eun was resting her chin on her hands while lying on the sunbed with her back completely exposed. She was looking at him with a bewitching smile.

Add knew that he would get dragged around by her again if he asked this. But he couldn't help but to ask.

"Is there a way for us to win from now on?"

"It's difficult to tell you without anything in return."

Eun spoke this then held up some tube with her thumb and index finger.

"Rub some sun cream on the back. Then I'll listen to your request."

"....."

He shouldn't have asked.

"Why are you saying you'll tell me if I do something like this?"

"Shall we say that it's a type of ceremony for reconciliation? I want to loosen boy's anger a bit."

"....."

Add reluctantly grabbed the sun cream. He knew how to use it..... But was she really telling him to do this?

"You have to do it using your hands. Don't think of doing it half-heartedly. Please put it on every inch, without any missing spots."

"....."

I should just splash this on her head. Add even got an impulse of wanting to do this as his insides boiled up... But even this whitely dyed hair was actually Ara's.

How dumfounding would it be if something like that happened to you when you were asleep?



“선크림을 등에다 발라주게,
그럼 부탁을 들어주지.”

“Rub some sun cream on the back. Then I’ll listen to your
request.”

“Phew....”

In the end, the fundamental problem as to why Add always got dragged around by Eun was because Eun didn't care at all about Ara's well being. No, it did look like she cared.....but she glosses over parts that she should be concerned about. There were much more cases where Add who was watching got startled instead and didn't know what to do.

If the person that was lying on the sunbed revealing her back right now was Ara, it wouldn't have been strange for her to faint from embarrassment.

Since it was to a point where she couldn't even step out easily because she was quite embarrassed about wearing a swimsuit.

“I'll request you to put it on every inch carefully.”

“Don't make me laugh.”

Add made his decision and threw the sun cream back at Eun. Eun caught the sun cream flying at her without even looking properly then narrowed her eyes.

“Doesn't boy want to know a way to win?”

“That's Ara's body. Stop fooling around with it so much.”

“Hmm, boy is caring about Ara's well being now? How condescending of you after pushing her into the perilous front line.”

“Having Ara in the front line is what I ordered Ara to do. If you have any complaints then say them separately. Don't mix them up.”

Add clearly drew the line then glared at Eun. If he gave into Eun's enticement right here and obediently followed her instructions....well, he could probably obtain the information he needed.

But wasn't that touching someone's body while its owner was asleep? Ara, or anyone else, he didn't want to commit such thievery.

If he really needs to, he'll take them fair and square. Hiding and stealing like a cowards wasn't Add's way of doing things!

“If you really hold Ara dear, then you shouldn't be offering this kind of deals. It seems you lived for too long that you don't know about human embarrassment and humiliation. Should I educate you straightly so that even a fox can understand?”

“Hmm, boy getting serious has a different taste to it.”

Eun didn't show particular unrest even though her offer got refused. Rather, she seemed to be glad by Add's serious reaction and was even making a satisfied smile.

“Fine, good. Why shouldn’t I speak a word for the boy when he treasures Ara this dearly? Alright, what do you want to find out from this fox Celestial Spirit who’s lived for thousand years that she can see through the order of heaven and earth?”

“.....”

Wasn’t this the first time she was so pleased like this? Add looked at her very suspiciously but it looked like she was really overjoyed.

.....He didn’t know why, but getting mad must have brought out a positive result.

Anyways, this was the first time Eun was saying she’d give out information this freely. When Add hesitated to think about what to ask, Eun pulled out one of her tails to tickle his stomach.

Add got distracted during his thought so he twitched his fingers. Then the Dynamo fired a shockwave towards the tail. But the tail Eun had pulled out had already disappeared without a trace.

“Don’t distract me in my thoughts. It won’t end with just the tail next time.”

“I did it because I’m feeling joyful. You should just play along too. Boy is way too finicky. You’d be a lot cuter if you went along with my jokes accordingly.”

Eun muttered but didn’t tease him anymore. She narrowed her eyes then spoke with a tone as if she was reminiscing about a far past.

“We lost.....huh? Boy became able to say some good words now.”

Ignoring Eun’s unknown words, Add repeatedly struggled in his mind then finally made his decision. There were many things he needed to know but let’s first deal with the problem that’s right in front of him.

“So, how can we defeat Elesis?”

“Yes, the answer is simple. You just have to become strong enough to beat Elly.”

“I’ll rip your ears off if you are joking around.”

“Didn’t boy already become sufficiently stronger after getting taught from Aisha?”

She already knew. She’s really a ghost after all.

“Boy right now can probably deal with Shadow Master by himself easily. You’re lacking self-recognition that you became stronger.”

Eun spoke tiredly while still lying down forwards with her back bathing in sunlight.

“Other members are the same. They all have a chance to become stronger. All you have to do this grab that chance.....then fight. Just like how Elsword became stronger.”

“I’m asking for a definite answer.”

Add’s voice heated up.

“You’ll find out about the big picture soon. I’ll tell you about the small pictures from beside you.”

“.....Is that all you’re going to tell me?”

“Don’t be so hasty. You can’t expect the rice to cook without lighting the fire.”

Add couldn’t understand what Eun was muttering about. It seemed for a moment that Eun’s heavy lips had finally opened, but all that came out were bizarre words.

Should he at least be glad that she did somewhat answer like she said she would?

It felt enraging since the answer was below his expectations. But there was no particular choice. If there was someone that can see out into the future, the best course of action would be to listen to that person to overcome the events to come.

Eun must have read Add’s thoughts because she shook her head.

“Don’t try to rely on me too much. Boy is already doing plenty well.”

“Who said I’m relying on you? I only bothered myself to chat with you for a bit.”

“Yes, that attitude right now is perfect. If you cling to me too much..... You’ll regret it enormously later.”

Eun’s bitter words, her words continued even before Add could question her about what they meant.

“I’m doing this to not make anyone cry. So don’t be so mad at me.”

“.....”

“It doesn’t matter if you hate me because I keep talking in circles or because I always joke around..... But it’s kind of sorrowful seeing boy show this much hot tempered reaction.”

Her drooped down fox ears were conveying her feelings.

“Do you think I was overjoyed to see you all lose to Elly? Do you think I had no desires of wanting to get out there myself and swing the spear as well?”

“If you really were, then give some proper information.....”

“Boy’s action changes if I reveal information. Then the future I’ve seen becomes useless.”

Add was about to refute but paused. What Eun said was pointing at a dilemma.

“Wait, then, could it be.....?”

“Didn’t I say from the start that the future isn’t something that’s set in stone? We are merely tossing dices.”

Eun let out a tired voice.

“Being suspected by people that I’m plotting something against them, that I’m an evil Specter, this happened almost more times than the amount of hairs on my tail. Well fine, but I didn’t tell them everything even if I knew. Even this time, I wanted a result where everyone was still alive even if we were to lose against Elly. That’s why I hid Elly’s true might from the boy.”

“.....”

“Why do you think that is?”

When Add didn’t answer, Eun answered her own question.

“If boy knew that there was no chance to win and only a chance of total annihilation awaited, then he would have tried with all his might to avoid the fight itself. You wouldn’t have accepted easily the words telling you to fight in order to lose. Especially since it was a fight where everyone’s lives could be in danger.”

“.....”

“You have to beat the iron to make it strong.”

Unlike the usual Eun, it somehow felt like she was putting in a lot of effort to justify herself. It felt like she was examining Add’s thoughts. And Add also....thought that Eun’s words were reasonable.

Add had desperately tried to defeat Elesis and wouldn’t have easily accepted it even if Eun had told him he couldn’t defeat her. Even if he accepted it, then he would have prioritized a method that didn’t confront Elesis.

Eun was probably reluctant about her choice as well.

“I have nothing else to say if boy still hates me after this”

“I don’t have any emotions to waste on you. I only prioritize in my goal.”

“Does boy still desire the girl’s Core?”

“Do I have to explain that in detail to you?”

Eun would have normally replied with a tease but she didn’t answer for some reason this time. That bothered Add so he spoke strongly.

“You should know that this is something inevitable if you already know about my goal. I’ll end this time in a way that I can accept it. That’s all there is to it. Is there something else you want to say?”

“Ah, come to think of it....”

Eun who looked like she had been listening quietly suddenly smiled enchantingly.

“The way for the girl to become stronger than right now is.....”

“.....”

“What was it again? I think I can almost recall it.”

Eun bit her index finger then sent him a provocative gaze. Add clenched his fists then suppressed the desire of wanting to hit her. He couldn’t help but to get angry when someone who’s been acting as if she was begging him to understand her was now provoking him like this.

He was dumb to have tried to understand her even by little. Add suppressed his temper then spoke with a lowest voice possible.

“What do you want now?”

“I can’t reach so please on the back.....”

“I’ll refuse. Don’t bring that up again. More of all, Eve getting stronger will only get in my way. Don’t you think that the condition of this deal is strange?”

Add spoke strongly.

“Eve is fine as she is right now. I just need to solve things myself by becoming stronger.”

“Huhuhu, you’re correct. How could I have made such a mistake?”

Eun seemed to nod in agreement then smiled beamingly.

“Let’s consider this negotiation broken.”

Woosh, a sudden cold wind seemed to breeze by then Ara’s hair got dyed in black. Then an innocent gaze looked at him, Add froze after making eye contact.

“Huh.....”

“M, Mr.Add?”

Ara got startled then looked around. She then turned her head to look at Add again then got even more startled. When Ara hastily tried to get up, Add turned his head around abruptly then shouted.

“Don’t get up like that!!”

“Pardon? Kiiiiyaaah!!”

Ara finally realized that the top piece of her swimsuit was unhooked then covered with her arms as she sat down on the sunbed. It would have been better if she just dropped on the sunbed instead but it seemed her thoughts couldn't reach that far and she was covering with her arms instead.

“.....I'm telling you this right now. This has nothing to do with me.”

“I, I know. B, but can you not look this way?”

Add turned around like she said, no he even covered his face with his palm and let out a sigh. There had been various circumstances with Eun before. But there were no cases where Ara had found out. How was he going to wrap this up now?

Sound of moving was heard from behind him then Ara spoke with a quiet voice.

“.....It's fine now, Mr.Add.”

“.....”

No, wouldn't it be better to just leave this place? Well, it's too late to run away now. Add thought this as he turned around. Ara bowed her head politely.

“I'm sorry, Lord Eun must have played some kind of prank. You must have been really troubled.”

“.....”

“I'll get mad at Lord Eun later. So please don't mind it.”

Add sighed then shook his head when Ara looked like she didn't know what to do. It was very obvious that this wasn't something to scold Ara for.

Also, Ara went through so many hardships during the struggle against Elesis. Add had made an unreasonable request to her by having her face Elesis alone until Elsword made up his mind and Add did feel a bit sorry for this.

“It was nothing. You should not mind it as well. Since its going get annoying otherwise.”

“It seems you kept Lord Eun company.”

Ara had a bit of fearful expression then asked carefully. It seemed Eun who went back after giving up control was telling Ara about what happened.

“I'm sorry for bothering you. So instead, I'll help with rubbing this sun cream on Mr.Add back!”

“.....I don't need it at all.”

“It's really okay so please don't refuse! Mr.Add's skin is very light so it will be bad for you like this.”

Ara held the tube tightly while looking straightly at Add as if she wouldn't let it end like this.

“Mr.Add went through many troubles too. So please rest even if it's just for a moment.”

“.....”

Well, that was somewhat correct. Wasn't today's vacation time a collaborative effort between Aisha and Add? Although the time he spent with Eve was relaxing, his heart had to suffer quite a bit from that. Also, his emotions fluctuated so much during his conversation with Eun that he was a bit tired now.

“.....If you insist that much, then go ahead.”

His skin getting tanned will get annoying as well. It didn't matter if he was just lending his back for a bit. Ara was also burning with a desire of wanting to rub sun cream on Add's back anyways.....

“Okay, please lie down carefully.”

Add obediently lied down on the sunbed just as Ara instructed. He could see Eve, Elsword, Rena and Aisha in the middle of playing volleyball far away. There must have been some kind of agreement because Aisha wasn't using teleports anymore.

They look so friendly with each other. After he gets some sun cream on him.... should he go join them too?

Add narrowed his eyes as he got soaked in a rare moment of peace. He even thought of warm things that he wouldn't have normally thought of. Then Ara who had finished her preparations made a strange sound.

“Haaaaaaaaa.....!”

Sound of her gathering energy, Add momentarily couldn't comprehend this situation as the chill went down his spine. Ara was mistaken about something again!! She's about to do something stupid!!!

The problem was that he was the target now. Add turned pale from fear and tried to escape fast as possible but Ara's reaction speed was faster.

“Ah! It will be bad if it misses so don't move, Mr.Add! Here I go!!”

Ara's palm filled with her concentrated shout powerfully smacked Add's back.

Crack.

Dramatic sound effect and a soundless scream rang across the beach.

Beach after the sunset.

El Search Party sat around and quietly ate dinner. Cooked vegetables and meat that Angkor cooked continued to get placed on their dishes. Good quality ingredients must have been used because it tasted good. No one complained.

And Add couldn't even move his finger properly due to the back pain. It stung whenever he moved.

".....A, Are you alright Mr.Add?"

"....."

Add was about to shoot back a glare but frowned instead when Ara beside him asked. What kind of phenomenon was this? It hurt whenever he moved.

"If it's difficult for you then I'll feed you instead! Here, say Ahh!"

"Don't. I'm not that hungry anyways."

Even talking causes his back muscle to ache. When Add averted his head from the meat Ara held out to him, Ara made a depressed face and only looked down at her knee. She looked very discouraged.....but she still ate the large piece of meat she had tried to feed Add.

She looked depressed even while chewing. It was getting difficult to ignore so Add spoke first.

"Just what did you hear to make you smash down on my back?"

"She said Mr.Add's back muscle was tensed so in order to loosen it....."

"Stop trusting what that fox says so easily."

It's useless to blame Ara who was just tricked. But Ara sternly shook her head at Add's advice.

"Lord Eun plays mean pranks from time to time, but she's still a good person."

"....."

Will you still be able to say that if you knew about what she did with your body up till now? Those words almost came out from Add's mouth but he didn't say more.

He didn't like the atmosphere right now. Everyone was sitting together, why were only Ara and Add talking with a low voice right now? Elsword was silently eating. Rena and Eve also didn't say anything as they ate.

Even Aisha sitting in the corner seat had her eyes facing down and didn't say anything. Add thought there must have been some kind of argument while they were playing volleyball but there were no such signs from the conversations that Dynamo had relayed to him.

Everyone's atmosphere had turned solemn after playing energetically together.

"What is this?"

Add couldn't bear to watch anymore and opened his mouth. They were playing so cheerfully during the day but went back to this atmosphere soon as the sun set. He didn't like this at all.

His displeasure overtook his back pain and he couldn't help but to speak out.

"Did somebody die? Why is everyone so quiet?"

"Didn't Mr. Add dislike noisy places?"

He ignored Ara asking while tilting her head then glared once at Eve, Rena and finally Elsword. Saying something like this wasn't like him and it was true that he didn't like rowdy atmosphere but this kind of sunken atmosphere was annoying in its own way.

"Is playing for a day not enough? Should we play tomorrow too? What are you all so dissatisfied about? Why are you all just sitting there looking dejected?"

Everyone stopped eating and looked at Add. He was quite reluctant to do this when he started, but his words didn't stop soon as he opened his mouth.

"Is losing against Elesis the problem here? Everyone is alive right now right? Isn't that enough?"

"Add."

Rena called calmly but Add didn't even pretend to listen. He couldn't bear to leave this miserable scene alone anymore.

It was the present he worked so hard to achieve; he had to pull out every stops to keep the El Search Party safe. But this is the result he gets?

Was this the feeling of a parent watching a child they raised so precious after doing everything they could for the child, only to see their child merely stay seated weakly in the corner of the room and just stay breathing?

"Are we going to end it like this? Should we have the El Search Party disbandment ceremony right here? Should we all just disband and go our own ways?"

It's irritating.

"How long are you all going to stay down like this? Let's just quit everything and part ways if you're going to be like this after just losing once. I don't have any regrets either! Anyone who wants to leave should just leave right now! I won't hold you back from leaving because you're scared!"

It's so irritating.

“But aren’t you guys..... mad?”

“.....”

“Aren’t you guys mad about running away like a defeated dog with its tail tucked in? Why are you all acting as if the sky is collapsing over just losing once?”

Yes, this was something only Add could say. It must be difficult and painful for them all. They shouldn’t be able to figure out what to do and can only wallow in self-hatred and feeling of helplessness after realizing all the way up to their bones that their skills weren’t enough.

Add clenched his fists tightly after recalling how Elsword was crying soundlessly.

That feeling of helplessness, sense of defeat, Add had already experienced that bitterly up till now. How much had he struggled in order to save Eve only to experience frustration and despair? He knew how cruel it was to urge someone who’s in a state of dejection to stop whining and get up. Add would have also given up everything as well and broke down if Eun wasn’t there at that time.

Telling someone who’s worn out to stand up once more is a cruel thing to do.

“Fine, is it fun licking each other’s wounds like this? Kukukuk, is it fun?”

“.....”

“How long are you going to lick each other’s wounds until you’re satisfied?! You idiots!! Are you going to let it end like this?”

But comforting them didn’t suit Add. He can leave comforting each other to some other soft hearted people.

If someone hands out a candy, then someone else has to give the whip.

He couldn’t let this present that he had finally achieved to degrade into something unsightly like this.

“If we lost this time, then we just have to win next time!!”

He didn’t even need to turn back time this time. Since everyone survived. So they can just collect their strengths again then challenge once more. Then win.

After letting out his rage, Add was about to stand up with his fists clenched when Elsword who had put down his spoon stood up first. Add who got his initiative taken looked at Elsword in an awkward position. Others were still sitting down as they looked up at Elsword.

Elsword didn't open his mouth right away and instead turned his head to look towards the sea for a moment. But no one urged Elsword to speak, not even Add.

Elsword took a deep breath then turned his gaze around again to look towards the El Search Party.

"I'm sorry everyone."

"....."

This guy, again? Add boiled up in anger but that wasn't the end of Elsword's words.

"Everyone knew that I'll end up fighting Big Sister, everyone trusted me and helped me so I could fight. But I still couldn't win."

".....It's not like you couldn't win."

Add got annoyed and threw his words bluntly.

He still didn't say that his plan was the one that was wrong because it would only feel like they were licking each other's wounds again.

"I don't know why Big Sister is on the demon's side and why she is pointing her sword at us. Even if I tried to talk....Big Sister probably won't tell me. Since actions always come first for her."

"....."

That's why I'm going to fight Big Sister with my sword again and win. I'll listen to the answer from Big Sister after I win. That's the conclusion I've come to."

Elsword quietly clenched his fists then revealed his determination.

"I couldn't win this time, but I'll win next time for sure. So everyone, please lend me your strengths."

"You're saying something unnecessary like an idiot again."

"Yes, I'll help."

"Yes! I also want to contest my strength against Ms.Elesis one more time!"

Other members each responded to Elsword's words.

Geez, this guy is popular in this group after all. Just when Add muttered while feeling his mind ease..... Elsword spoke again.

"I'll be relying on you as well when that time comes, Big Brother Add."

".....There are only idiots here so I have no choice but to use my brain."

No one retorted when Add mocked. It was something he said to get them angry so he felt awkward when there were no reactions.

“Kukukuk.”

“Alright, it’s good that you guys are determined. But what will you do next?”

Aisha who had been listening without saying a word threw a question that broke the atmosphere. It was a sound that felt like it had dumped a bucket of cold water on the El Search Party just when they were finally starting to recover their mood.

But the words that Aisha threw at them were very sharp and realistic.

“You guys can’t defeat Elesis and the demons that have captured Velder as you are right now. So you all figured out your place. We’ll win next time, constructing a future-oriented goal like this is fine. But do you guys have any detailed plans?”

“.....”

Gazes that had been examining each other all faced towards Add in the end.

But bitterly, Add didn’t have any realistic alternatives either.

Should they go into some deep mountain and train for a while? But they couldn’t let the demon army run amok for too long.

“What? You guys had a ‘unite together’ rally first without any plans?”

“Will you help us too?”

Aisha made an extremely surprised face at Elsword’s question then she quickly waved her hand.

“H, help? Who said I’m going to help?! Why should I have to join the likes of you guys and help?”

“Because you already helped us. I think it will be reassuring if you are together with us.”

“.....R, reassuring.”

Aisha acted like she didn’t know what to do. She then became angry all of a sudden.

“D, don’t say something stupid! Stop always trying to blindly borrow someone else’s strength and try to solve it by yourselves!”

“It seems you have something in mind. Hurry up and say it, I’ll bother to listen to it for now.”

It wasn’t intentional but Add joined the conversation to help Elsword out. For some reason, Aisha was showing quite a disoriented reaction from Elsword’s request. She refused in an instant when Add had requested but she acted like she didn’t know what to do when Elsword had requested.

Was this guy popular with people other than the party members as well?

Add suspiciously stole a glance at Elsword but whatever the reason was, this was a good chance. Let's find out whatever he can while Aisha is disturbed.

"Listen? What do you mean by listen? Why are you acting so confidently now?"

"Is there a way?"

When Elsword asked, Aisha stopped in the middle of letting out her temper then frowned. Aisha finally sighed then lightly snapped her finger. Then gems the size of a person's hand started to float around her.

This was beach at night. As if the stars had descended, lights sprayed out brightly amidst the darkness where there had been no light sources except for the bonfire.

Rena recognised what the gems circling around Aisha were and let out a quiet groan.

"They're El."

The numbers of El were 4. They each had red, orange, pink and purple colors. At Aisha's hand gesture, each El flew slowly towards the El Search Party.

Red went to Elsword, orange to Ara, pink to Eve and finally the purple came towards Add.

They all looked down mesmerized at the shining El that had flown in front of their chests. Ara was stroking it in amazement.

"Wow! It's so warm...."

"Why are you giving these to us?"

Giving the El to the El Search Party should normally mean making a request to return these to their original places. But there was no reason to hand them out separately if she was asking for them to do this.

"I'm presenting these Els that I specially processed to you all. Their tentative name is Memory of Time and Space. You guys will be able to look upon a higher stage the moment those Els resonate with your souls."

"Can I become stronger if I have this?"

Ara asked while still bewildered.

"I don't know either."

Aisha replied coldly.

“If you guys strongly wish to become stronger, then at some moment those Els might answer to you. Then the path might open.”

“It only sounds like a fraud.”

Add criticised but Eve was already storing the El. Ara was holding her El tightly and was praying with her eyes closed.

“That won’t work. Resonation of soul isn’t something that’s easy. You need an intense desperation.”

“So what are you going to make us do after giving us these?”

Just as Add had deduced, Aisha didn’t protect the El Search Party for no reason. She made Elesis back off, gave them leisure to collect their minds and even gave them these special Els. Having the El Search Party drive off the demons must be her goal.

“There’s no use going back to Velder right now. Go to Hamel, the capital of the principality of Senace. Make the Velder Kingdom’s knights there withdraw. Then Vanessa will be able to get a breather and it will be a great help in defeating the demons in Velder. I’ll keep the Velder’s demons at bay until then.”

“Ah, so there weren’t enough forces because they sent them to Hamel.”

Elsword nodded as if he finally understood. There were differences in time for each area of Elrios that the demon attacked.

Demons had first endangered Hamel. So Hamel sent out a request for reinforcements to the nearby nation of Velder. But when those reinforcements had left for Hamel, the Velder Kingdom got raided by demons as well. That was why Velder was in a sorry state it was right now.

“Alright, we’ll go.”

Add understood the situation and agreed. There was no way they’d win if they went back to Velder right now to fight Elesis again.

It should be advantageous to go to Hamel first to gather reinforcements, and then have the final confrontation in Velder.

Everyone agreed to Add’s decision and nodded.

“Then help us by teleporting us there.”

“There’s no need to hurry. Go clean up the rooms you all used first, you should do at least that much for letting you stay right?”

“Yes, let’s do that.”

Others all nodded in agreement to Rena's words. Everyone was about to go back to their lodge when Aisha grabbed Elsword's sleeve while being careful so the others wouldn't notice.

"Wait, I have something left to say to you so stay here."

"Hmm?"

Elsword tilted his head as if he couldn't understand. But Aisha spoke again with a very nervous expression.

"I have something to say to you."

"Alright."

Elsword stopped his steps and quietly looked out towards the night's ocean. Aisha quietly waited for the time to pass.

Elsword spoke when the others going back to the lodge couldn't be seen anymore.

"Can't you say it now?"

"...."

Aisha still grabbing onto Elsword's sleeve sighed as if she was quite hesitant.

"First, keep this a secret. You can't tell this to anyone, even Eve."

"Why? What is it?"

"Promise me first. Didn't you forget that I saved you from Big Sister Elly?"

Elsword got startled when Elesis was mentioned but still nodded to agree. Aisha finally seemed to have made up her mind as she pulled out pair of rings then put it on top of her palm.

She then grabbed one of those and held it out towards Elsword.

"This ring, keep it on from now on."

"Ring?"

Elsword took it and looked at it to see that it was a beautifully crafted ring. There were quite a bit of power emanating from it. It must not be a normal ring considering how a powerful magician like Aisha would hand it over personally.

Elsword nodded and tried to put away the ring inside his chest. Then Aisha got angry and kicked his shin.

"Ow! Why did you kick me?!"

“I told you to keep it on, not keep it inside your chest! Do you have your finger on your chest?!”

Because Aisha nitpicked impudently, Elsword frowned and examined the ring again. Elsword was a guy so he didn't have any reason to wear a ring. Not only that, he was a swordsman.

“How am I going to swing my sword with this uncomfortable thing on my finger?”

“.....Are you going to keep making a lady angry?”

When Aisha spoke threateningly, Elsword muttered as he brought himself to try and put on the ring.

He tried to put it on his index finger but it didn't fit.

“Not there, on the ring finger, your fourth finger. Ah, geez!!”

Aisha got annoyed and could bear to watch anymore. She grabbed Elsword's hand then personally placed the ring on his finger. Elsword frowned at the sudden feeling of irritation on his hand and tried to fix the ring's position.But it didn't even move an inch.

“.....Why won't it come off?”

“Hohoho, do you really think that's going to come off? That's a ring this Great Aisha had specially crafted so it will never come off if you put it on once! I took extra care since you might take it off merely because it's bothersome before you sleep then wake up to only lose it the day after!”

When Aisha spoke proudly, Elsword gave up taking the ring off and asked.

“Why are you giving this to me?”

“It's a special ring that I crafted as a pair. Special protective and transmitting power activates when the two owners are wearing it. So when you and I are wearing these, I can find out if you are in danger. I can't move carelessly because of circumstances but if you are really in danger, then I'll come to help you.”

Aisha raised her index finger then put it in front of her lips.

“You have to absolutely keep this a secret from the others. Especially to Add. Since he'll obviously try to manipulate it. This is a secret between only the two of us, you and me. Promise me again.”

“Yes, I got it.”

“You can't even tell this to Eve. It's a promise!”

Elsword nodded when Aisha repeatedly requested.

“I got it, I won't tell it to anyone.”

“.....Really?”

“I’ll keep it since it’s a promise I made with Big Sister’s friend.”

Aisha’s expression turned vague at Elsword’s answer. A face as if she was glad yet disappointed.

“.....So you won’t say that since it’s a promise you made with me anymore.”

“Hmm?”

“No, it’s a story that you don’t need to know. It’s a story that only I need to know about.”

Aisha unconsciously shook her head as she waved hand. This caused Aisha’s portion of the ring to fall to the ground. Aisha quickly tried to bend down to pick it up but Elsword picked it up faster.

“Here, hold out your hand.”

“Huh?uuuuuuuuuh?!”

“Didn’t you say that you need to keep it on as well? I’ll put it on for you.”

Aisha’s face abruptly reddened at the words that Elsword said without much thought. She looked like she didn’t know how to react then she finally turned around and shouted.

“Wait a moment, Job Change!!”

Aisha’s body shined with gold light then her appearance that appeared after was completely different.

Until just now she wore revealing attire with her belly exposed. But now she didn’t have any exposures except her legs. Not only that, but her hair was neatly tied down so although her face was the same as before, her impression had changed completely.

If just before was a lively and provocative magician, this was now a neat and elegant magician.

“.....Please do it in this appearance.”

Elsword was surprised at Aisha’s sudden change in appearance but didn’t ask for details. He thought that she transformed like this because she’s such a powerful magician. Not only that, but it was easier to understand since he had already seen Elesis transform.

Her hand was held out towards him after taking the glove off. Elsword put the ring on Aisha’s ring finger. A beach in a moonlit night, only the sound of waves lingered around the two of them.

“Alright, it’s done.”

“.....okay.”

Aisha raised her hand to look up at the ring on her finger with a faint gaze. It was bitter and sorrowful, yet joyous gaze.



“So we can contact each other if we have this right?”

“.....Only I’m able to know how you are doing.”

“Why don’t you join the El Search Party too if you are that worried? Can’t we go together?”

Aisha weakly shook her head at the words Elsword spoke without any regard. Elsword became confused and asked again.

“Hey, are you crying?”

“.....No, your eyes must have been mistaken.”

Aisha wiped her eyes with the back of her hand then looked at Elsword affectionately. Elsword scratched his head while looking troubled then stretched out his hand towards Aisha.

“Let’s just go together. I’m worried about you.”

“.....I’m fine by myself.”

Aisha murmured weakly. Elsword was about to say something but Aisha firmly refused this time.

“Thank you for asking me to come together with you. But I can’t right now. I can’t in this time.”

“.....”

“But it really made me happy.”

Aisha back stepped as she smiled. Elsword instinctively knew that it wasn’t a simple smile but he didn’t know what he should say.

The magician with the bright white moon, the dark blue ocean behind her back was smiling ever so sadly.

The girl was joyous yet sad.

“Go now, you can’t stay here anymore.”

“What are you....”

“Goodbye.”

Elsword’s form disappeared just when Aisha waved her hand with a one sided goodbye. She had teleported him. She sent him to Hamel.

It wasn’t just Elsword, she sent the entire El Search Party. Now the only human remaining in this island was Aisha alone.

Aisha stood blankly by herself on the beach then let out a thin sigh as she slowly turned her head.

“Stop hiding there and come out Chloe who I really hate. Although it’s not like I hate you for any other reason than being on the demon’s side.”

“.....”

Sound of rustling leaves was heard then Dark Elves started appearing. Roughly couple hundreds of them. How had they not known when such a large number hand infiltrated the island?

The answer was simple, they had just arrived using teleport.

Commander Chloe, the leader of the Dark Elves looked at Aisha as she spoke.

“Where did you send the El Search Party?”

“Stop the chat. I’m not in a mood for it right now.”

Aisha spoke bitterly then looked down towards the tip of her feet. She was in a completely defenceless position but Dark Elves did not let their guard down.

They couldn’t let their guards down against this purple magician that had appeared abruptly to lock down the Velder’s battlefield.

“It’s already obvious seeing how you came out breaking through my Dimension barrier. Your position would have dropped down low when I appeared to take care of Velder. As the general of the army that captured Velder, you probably requested to personally take care of me in order to save face right?”

“.....”

At Aisha words that saw through everything, Chloe didn’t say it wasn’t. Aisha slowly turned around. What was hanging near her lips was a cold mocking smile.

“But no one must have told you who I am. If you were even a bit of an important strength to them then they would have stopped you from facing the Dimension Princess without knowing your place.”

“Where did you hide the El Search Party that you took with you?”

“I already sent them away so you can’t follow them. And you won’t be able to follow them. Since I’m in front of you right now.”

Chloe frowned at this haughty word. There were hundreds of her subordinates standing ready. It shouldn’t be hard to take care of Aisha if she just gave the order. But she felt somehow uneasy.

Why was she acting so confidently in front of hundreds of elite Dark Elf squad?

“It’s not like I’m doing this because I want to.”

“.....Huh?”

“It’s not like I’m fighting alone separated by myself because I want to.”

Aisha spoke to herself then held up her hand in front of her eyes. Ring that shined from being reflected by the moonlight, its other half wasn’t here in this place anymore.

Aisha had personally pushed his back to send him away.

“This is something that I chose for myself.But there are too many things that I’ve lost for me to say this. Original memories, and there’s someone else in the place where I should be and my old friends don’t even recognise me anymore. Can you understand how that feels?”

“.....”

“You won’t know how it feels to watch even a precious promise disappear and only remain as a vague afterimage.”

Aisha grabbed her staff then looked towards the Dark Elves. There wasn’t even a reason to enflame her will to fight.

“But even so, even though everyone had forgotten about me, it’s a path that I’ve chosen for myself. So I’ll continue to fight even by myself. Go tell this to D.”

“What do you mean.....?”

“Although that’s only if you survive.”

Soon as Aisha’s words ended, the air in the island suddenly dropped. Not just dropped, but it became an absolute zero, it had frozen everything solid.

Snowstorm struck without any warning. It wasn’t an attack anyone could face.

Wooooosh!

A sudden cold wave mixed with snow and hail. It wasn’t enough to say that it was shearing through flesh. Hands and legs froze up even before they could think about a way to deal with this. Terrifying ice storm made the sky and earth freeze up. It was impossible for creatures made out of flesh and blood to withstand this.

Hundreds of Dark Elves couldn’t even react and were all frozen solid. With all the ice sculptures in front of her now, Aisha frowned.

“Did Chloe run away? Well, she was always at least good at running away.”

Magician who had instantly caused hundreds of her enemies to freeze, who hadn’t even broke a sweat didn’t give any more interest and walked forwards.

Even the sea was frozen due to this powerful magic.

Frozen sea was now shining with silver gleams. The magician slid slightly on ice's surface then suddenly let out a lonely sigh.

This strong power that she obtained by even erasing her existence from the original time. But this wasn't a power she obtained because she wanted it. It was a power she obtained because it was necessary.

"This wasn't what I wanted. What I wanted was....."

The magician sorrowfully murmured then raised her head to look up towards the moon. Her cold wave had swept across the earth in no time. But even amidst this abnormality that had even frozen the sea, the moon hadn't changed and was shining beautifully.

Aisha's gaze as she unknowingly stretched out her hand towards the moon remained on her ring finger. Moonlight reflected from the ring as it sprayed out a brilliant light.

"How stupid....."

Unlike her words, the magician's face was gentle. The girl looked at the ring that was reflecting moonlight and smiled slightly as she prayed.

"It will be hard but give it your best, Elsword."

For this ring's other half.

For the knight to finish his fight and return safely.

And for days she can be together with her friends again to return someday.

"Is everyone alright?"

"Yes, there are no abnormalities."

"It really surprised me."

"That magician.....she should have told us before she sent us."

The El Search Party that had suddenly been teleported confirmed each other's well being then looked around to see where they were. Seaport with ships docked, there was a city with an impressionable white buildings and flowing water in front of them.

"This is Hamel. It's good that we were able to arrive in no time at all."

“That magician... what if something had gone wrong? Hey, Elsword?”

Elsword didn't join in the others' conversation and vacantly looked across, towards the far sea that the moonlight dimly shined upon.

“Why are you standing there out of your mind? Aren't you the one who saw that magician last?”

“.....I don't quite understand, but.”

Elsword murmured while still looking out towards the sea.

“I think I knew her before.”

“What?”

Add and the other members made a confused expression but Elsword didn't talk anymore. An indescribable feeling was rushing up from his heart.

Let's try talking to her one more time when we meet again.

Boy who had been looking out towards the far sea collected his mind as such then turned around. He didn't know what this jerking feeling in his heart was, but it was something to think about later.

Ocean and moonlit sky separated the two once again.

5. Sibling of a sinner

City of water, Hamel.

It's was the capital of the principality of Senace which was Velder's ally nation. As to be expected from a capital city, it used to be a well developed and beautiful. But that was now a thing of the past due to the demon invasion of Elrios. Hamel had now transformed into a city during the time of war.

Taking in refugees coming in from all over the nation, preparing to fight with the demons, maintaining public order.....there were way too many tasks that had to be done.

These were difficult problems to tackle for Senace that had been so drenched in peace to the point where they had almost forgotten how to fight. That's why they had hastily requested for reinforcements from the Velder Kingdom. Velder Kingdom that hadn't been attacked by demons at this point deployed Velder Kingdom Knights to Hamel according to the pact of their alliance with Senace.

Penensio, the leader of the Velder Kingdom Knights was sitting leaning against a wall in the streets where people moved about. He had even brought a chair and was purposely waiting.

Refugees passing by stole a glance at him but they just passed by after seeing Penensio's calm posture, serious face and his armor. Penensio was deep in thought as he sat in the corner of the street while watching people passing by. He let out a solemn sigh.

These refugees walking around aimlessly to find a place to rest, ones that sat crouched down groaning in pain, you almost couldn't find anyone that wasn't limping or had trouble moving their arms. One could have said that couple of discomforts were nothing in this time of the demon invasion. But that wasn't it. People with more serious injuries didn't even get the chance to escape to Hamel.

What Penensio was seeing in front of him was just the tip of the iceberg. The actual situation was much more tragic. Just when Penensio was shaking his head depressingly, one soldier hastily came up running to him then saluted.

"I have a report, captain Penensio."

"Alright."

It has been half a year already but the word captain still felt way too unfamiliar to him. Because of Penensio's gloomy answer, the soldier reported hesitantly thinking that he had done something wrong.

"People called the El Search Party are requesting a meeting with you captain. They are saying they are the El Search Party that defeated the Shadow Master in Elder. I told them to stand by for now."

“Then please bring them here.”

“Will that be alright?”

Soldier asked carefully. Because Penensio had the command of the most powerful troops in this city, the amount of people that wanted to meet Penensio were more numerous than the clouds in the sky.

People with strength were revered during the time of war. It was a situation where even a random nobody was begging to speak with Penensio.

And there was no way Penensio would refuse all of those requests because of his sincere personality. That was why his soldiers were filtering through those requests for his sake.....But the El Search Party had their names well known so they had reported it to Penensio first.

“I heard about their fight in Elder as well. They might be of help. And also....”

When Penensio’s words trailed as if he won’t speak anymore, the soldier saluted then hurriedly ran off. Penensio looked at the soldier’s back as he closed his eyes then let out a tired sigh.

Principality of Senace and Velder Kingdom were allies. But in the end, they were completely different nations. Velder Kingdom Knights were foreign forces here. This situation where a foreign nation’s army was stationed in Senace’s capital was an extremely volatile political matter.....So Penensio had to re-examine many details that he wouldn’t have normally paid attention to before.

This kind of work didn’t fit with Penensio’s personality. He took up his sword in order to protect his Kingdom and the people as a knight. He didn’t want to act while paying attention to complicated politics and international affairs.

“Captain huh.....”

He didn’t like this captain title in the first place. Just when Penensio was sighing bitterly, he heard unique footsteps approach him. They weren’t footsteps of weak refugees that were passing by.

They were sounds that only those who were disciplined and have fought before could make.

When Penensio opened his eyes and looked sideways, he could see unfamiliar faces behind the soldiers. Penensio realized that they were the El Search Party and got up from his seat to greet them.

“I’m captain of the Velder Kingdom Knights, Penensio. Welcome.....”

“.....”

A familiar boy. Penensio closed his mouth when his eyes met with Elsword. Other members looked confusedly when a silence fell between Elsword and Penensio.

Eve asked the representative for the rest.

“Do you know each other, Elsword?”

“Yea..... It’s been a long time, Mr.Penensio.”

When Elsword bowed extremely politely, Penensio also bowed quietly in response. A certain shared feeling that couldn’t be explained by just saying that they were both knights was flowing between the two.

“Mr.Penensio was..... Vice captain of the Red Knights.”

“Does that mean he’s quite strong? That will be useful.”

Just when Elsword was about to continue his words, Add cut him off. Other members were looking at Add confusedly as to why he cut off the conversation so openly. Add laughed quietly.

“Kukukuk, let’s leave the personal talks for later and talk about the business at hand. There’s no time to waste.”

“Wai.....”

“Alright, let’s do that.”

Eve was about to say something but Rena quickly stepped up and stopped her. Rena gave Eve a quiet gaze then continued the conversation.

“Did you already hear the news about Velder? We’re here to request you to withdraw from here.”

“I’ve already heard from the court magician. She also told me about how all of you will be here.”

Penensio reminisced for a while then started to organize their current situation with Rena. Add left the talking to Rena and quickly approached beside Elsword and poked his sides.

“Keep the thing about Elesis a secret. It will get complicated otherwise. Even you should know that much right?”

“.....Yea.”

Elsword must have lately realized it as well and nodded heavily. They had forgotten because they were too busy fighting with Elesis, but the fact that she had joined the demons was actually a very shocking event.

For the strongest leader of the Red Knights to become an enemy of the human race, you couldn’t even begin to imagine what kind of backlash it would bring. They won’t be able to hide it forever but it was better to keep it a secret that only few people knew about much as possible.

Add ran various simulations in his head while looking at Elsword.

‘.....Since you don’t know what might happen to this guy if everyone found out.’

Strongest knight swinging her sword for the demons. If people found this out, then wouldn't people's gaze towards her brother Elsword become filled with misunderstanding and suspicion?

You didn't know what kind of harm they'd try to inflict on Elsword.

"No, it's not like I care about what happens to you....."

"What?"

".....I was just talking to myself. Forget it."

Add spoke bluntly then looked at Eve. Eve stared at him silently for a bit then spoke quietly.

"I'd like an explanation about what happened just now."

"Kukukuk, what else do you want me to explain? It was just annoying to have them talk about their past."

"If it's something difficult to say here then let's talk about it separately later."

When Eve spoke sternly, Add froze in middle of his laugh. But that only lasted for a short moment and Add snorted right after as he nodded.

"Then let's talk with just the two of us tonight. Kukuk."

"Understood."

"....."

He thought she'd give up if he said this but she accepted it. Add was startled but organized the situation.

Eve must have realized late that there was some kind of reason for Add purposely stopping Elsword and Penensio's conversation. Eve was not too knowledgeable about human world's affairs so she must not have understood Add's thoughts and considerations. She was staying quiet for now because Rena had stopped her. But she wants to hear an explanation separately.

Well, explaining his actions in detail was annoying so he didn't want to. But if you thought about this in a different angle, this was a chance to talk with her alone. It could be a chance to make her look around.

He'll approach closer to his goal like this step by step.

"Kukukuk, Kuahahahah!!"

"Mr.Add? I have something I want to ask."

Add was laughing enjoyably when Ara poked his back. Add had been feeling joyful for a change but now frowned as he turned around.

“Who are the demons that are threatening Hamel?”

“They are Shadow demons and the demon general Ran.”

Penensio who’s been speaking with Rena heard Ara’s words and told her. Ara got extremely surprised as her eyes opened widely then she grabbed her spear tightly.

“Finally, Elder broth.....”

“Hey!”

Add got extremely surprised and quickly covered Ara’s mouth with his hands. Ara’s eyes turned round because her mouth got covered while speaking. But a cold sweat was dripping down Add’s back.

Come to think of it, Ran was siblings with Ara. Demon battalion were running wild in Hamel and sister of that battalion’s general was right here.

You could easily tell what state Hamel was in by looking at the ragged attires of everyone passing by and the gloomy faces of all the people sitting leaning on the wall only blinking vacantly.

Lethargic people that weren’t even trying to chase away a fly that was sitting on their forehead.

This was a city in the middle of war and the person responsible for creating this situation was Ran. Revealing herself as that person’s sister would be bringing harm onto herself.

Add told Ara with a threatening expression.

“Don’t say anything stupid. Absolutely.”

“MmmMmph?”

When Ara asked with a face as if she didn’t understand, Add whispered to her ear so the others couldn’t hear.

His breath touching her ear must have tickled because Ara was twisting her body and acting like she didn’t know what to do. This irritated Add who was serious.

“Keep the fact that your brother is a demon general absolutely a secret. Things can go wrong really quickly if they find out.”

“.....”

Ara asked about how he knew Ran and her relationship with a surprised expression. Add gestured towards the surrounding area with his chin.

Refugees degraded into beggars, starving people, and people sitting side by side below the fence only breathing blankly while not even moving a finger.

Despair and fear, a city ruled by depression.

“Look, this is all Ran’s doing. Revealing you’re his sister here would only put yourself and even us in danger.”

“.....”

She must have realized finally and nodded with a mournful face. Add breathed a sigh of relief then took his hands off. Eve who had been watching spoke coldly.

“I thought you weren’t supposed to show acts of affection in the streets.”

“It’s that something stupid like that. And also....”

Should it be better to tell the others about Ran and Ara’s relationship? Add was hesitating when Penensio asked with a serious tone.

“Could it be that you know something about the demons?”

“I, I don’t know anything! Elder brother Ran and I really don’t know each other. It’s not like I traveled in order to meet him again!”

Ara got startled and answered hastily.....and it became a situation where it would have been better for her to not answer at all. Just when Add covered his face with his palm and lamented, Rena quickly stepped up and spoke to Penensio.

“We’d like to speak to the lord of Hamel before we come up with a detailed plan. May I ask you to introduce us to the lord here?”

“Yes, please follow me.”

He could have just asked the soldiers but Penensio started to personally guide them.

He was considering the El Search Party as not some mere troops and was treating them as people worth treating specially. Aisha coming first and telling him beforehand must have played a part but Elsword being in this group should have also played a large part in his decision.

Ara’s face had turned bright red and she was slowly walking in the very back of the group with her gaze facing solely towards the ground. Seeing that she was looking like she knew what she did wrong, Add muttered to her.

“Anyways, don’t say anything. Just stay quiet.”

“.....Yes, I’m sorry.”

“Even we could get in trouble because of your mistake. Don’t you know that the entire El Search Party could get suspected of being in league with the demons?”

This wasn’t Velder Kingdom, this was Senace which was a completely different nation. If the fact that Ara was Ran’s younger sister got found out, it won’t just end with some simple suspicions. She could get arrested, imprisoned or something even worse. Not only that, but things could go out of control and become not only Ara’s problem but become a problem for the entire El Search Party.

‘.....It will become like that for sure.’

There was no way the other members would not do anything when Ara was in trouble. Add drew a picture of a headache filled future and sighed as he took a glance back at Ara then he paused.

Ara’s eyes were filled to the brim with tears.

“Hey, hey.....”

“It, it’s nothing. It’s just because I’m feeling strange.”

Ara quickly wiped her tears with the back of her hand but this still couldn’t hide the tears that were flowing out from her eyes. Was it because she was touched that she can finally meet her brother? Or was it some other reason? Add didn’t know but....

It was troublesome either way. Like this, in the other people’s eyes it would look like Add had made Ara cry. Of course, Add had no intention to do that at all. All he did was sharply warn her.....

“This is driving me crazy, seriously.....”

She was walking with tears dripping down her face without making any sounds. It was even making him who was walking beside her painful. Gladly or unfortunately, others were walking far in front so only Add knew that Ara was crying right now.

“I’m sorry for making you see me while I’m so unsightly.....”

Ara was also trying her best to wipe away her tears but it seemed she was having trouble suppressing her emotions.

“It’s just... my heart hurts so much knowing that Elder Brother caused all of this.....”

“.....”

Add shut his mouth after realizing that Ara’s eyes were looking around at her surroundings. He didn’t have any siblings so he didn’t know how Ara was feeling right now. Elsword would be better for sharing this kind of feelings with her.

Older sibling that ran away from home was on the demons’ side causing atrocities.....What was the younger sibling who was left behind supposed to do?

Add sighed after recalling how Elsword couldn't even think about fighting when he was suddenly faced with Elesis.

This wasn't something to scold Ara for.

"You'll.... Meet him soon anyways."

".....Yes."

"So try to solve it then. Didn't you say that you'll win this time? After you meet him, beat him up or tie him up and drop him in the water, do whatever you want."

Add's hand after he spoke bluntly lingered in the air. He was quite hesitant but he had already done this to Elsword as well.

Add placed his hand on top of Ara's head while she was crying sorrowfully. He patted softly and let out a dejected sigh.

"Are you going to fight while crying?"

".....I'm sorry."

"Don't cry when we fight later. So....."

Add forcefully brought out the words that were trying their best to not leave his mouth.

"Cry all you want right now."

".....May I really?"

"But I'll kick you if you cry later and drag us down."

Add spoke while looking sideways. People in the streets that had stopped to look at the two of them got surprised by Add's violent gaze and quickly started to walk again.

"Thank you."

Ara spoke quietly then drove her face into Add's chest. Tear marks will get on his jacket but unlike his usual self, Add didn't say anything and silently turned his head.

What else can he say to her when she's crying because of someone precious to her?

The best thing Add could do was to provide her a place to shed her tears. He could bear with this much.

Since he had also cried before.



When Ara finally settled down after a while, Add took her and headed to the lord's quarters. They walked slowly but because they had already communicated using the Nasod Megaphone, and because the two of their mobility were the best in the party, they could arrive at the lord's quarters without much delay.

The two got guided to the office and stopped in front of the door. Ara's eyes were swollen after crying for a while.

"Thank you, Mr.Add."

"Hmph, its better than having you get in our way later."

"Yes, I'll do my best!"

When Ara responded with a sweet smile with her eyes still red from crying, Add snorted and entered the office.

Well, it was like the El Search Party to be moderately soft hearted anyways.

Penensio and the other members that had arrived earlier were talking to the person that seemed to be the lord. When Ara and Add who had arrived late approached them, the lord got up from her chair.

Bright white armor, she was a girl with pretty and long blonde hair. Add was slightly surprised that the lord was a girl but he didn't mind this. Wasn't Vanessa also a girl but sufficiently carried out her tasks?

The reason Add got surprised was.....

"A little girl?"

No matter how Add saw, she looked younger than him. Maybe 15 or 16 years old? Even though she wore a heavy armor, she was still a lot shorter than Add.

This young and frail looking girl is the lord of Hamel?

Even before the others could respond to Add's blatant rude reaction, the lord trailed her words as if she was troubled.

"First of all, I'm a boy."

"....."

But no matter how you saw, he looks like a girl. Add stared suspiciously at the lord's fine gold blonde hair that came down up to his waist. Add shook his head shortly after. Did it matter if this kid who looked like a girl no matter how you saw was actually a guy?

Add just wished he wouldn't get in their way. Add turned his attention about the lord's appearance off then asked with a rough voice.

"So, how's the situation going here?"

"Let's introduce each other first. I'm Chung who's temporarily in charge of the lord's position in Hamel. And your name is?"

"I'm Add."

Add's impression of him changed when he was treated politely. Unlike his pretty appearance, he was polite and behaved with discipline. It looked like they could speak on the same page. He'll be of help if things went well.

Add got a slight favorable impression of the young boy and unlike his usual self, he held out his hand first requesting for a handshake. Chung also smiled as he grabbed Add's hand.

"I thank you from bottom of my heart for coming this far in order to help Hamel, Mr.Add."

"Kukukuk, it's nothing. We'll finish this up quickly since we're here. Just you wait."

"Just listening to that makes me glad. Hamel's citizens will welcome all of you as well."

Add felt uplifted when the lord humbled himself and treated him with respect. Normally, people in high positions were stuck up and hard to talk to but this boy called Chung was clearly different.

They haven't shared too many words yet, but Add could already sense that he'll be easy to talk to. This will make their work here much easier.

"And who's this lady over here?"

"Ah, I'm Ara Haan. Nice to meet you Mr.Chung."

Ara also smiled and held out her hand..... But Chung's face abruptly stiffened. He looked around once at Penensio then the other El Search Party members, and then he finally made an eye contact with Ara. He then slowly stepped backwards.

Ara's eye turned round when the hand she held out for greetings got openly rejected. But Chung didn't care about the others' confused gaze and went back to his seat and reached out his hand sideways.

Click!

Add hadn't realized it before because he was greeting Chung, but there was a giant white object standing beside the chair that Chung was sitting on before. As an engineer, Add could tell from a first glance that it wasn't any normal object. It was taller than a person and almost looked like.....

A weapon?

“Is your name really Ara Haan?”

“Huh? Yes.”

Ara was startled by Chung’s cold voice but still answered. Chung narrowed his eyes then spoke towards Penensio.

“Sir Penensio, arrest Ara Haan.”

“Huh?”

“Pardon me?”

Confused voices rang across the office. When Penensio didn’t move, Chung stomped his feet lightly.

Thump! The office door opened then soldiers poured in.

“What’s the meaning of this? Hamel’s lord?!”

“That’s temporary lord for you. And.....”

Chung stared at Ara with a gaze that was cold beyond measure.

“It’s an order. Arrest Ara Haan.”

“Wait a moment! What do you think you’re doing?”

Rena spoke in an angry voice that was rare for her. Add also came to his senses and quickly moved beside Ara.

Getting arrested when they had come to help, what in the world.....

“Someone who’s in league with the demon general snuck in. Of course she’ll have to be arrested.”

At Chung’s cold words, Add realized what was going on right now.

He didn’t know how he found out, but Chung knew that Ran and Ara were siblings!

Add quickly tried to select some words to persuade Chung but realized that nothing he said to this boy would be useful.

Chung’s eyes were burning with rage, with fury as if he’ll never forgive.

“Don’t take her life. I’ll use her as a hostage during the fight with Ran.”

“.....What did Elder Brother do?”

Ara must have realized the situation as well and asked with a shaking voice. You could tell with a single glance that Chung wasn't doing this as a lord ruling over Hamel. This had his personal feelings mixed in.

"I have to avenge my father."

Speaking this seemed to have made Chung angrier and he clenched his fists. Chung was shaking in fury then finally swung his arm and ordered the soldiers.

"She only needs to have her life intact. Arrest her."

Just at that moment when the soldiers followed his order and was swarming in towards Ara, in the moment when Add was about to activate his Dynamos, Elsword kicked the ground and sprayed his sword.

Cl-cl-cl-cl-clank!!

When Elsword swung his sword while taking a step as if he was sliding, all the spears that the soldiers were holding flew towards the ceiling. Elsword who had just disarmed all the soldiers in an instant quietly lowered his sword then shot a glare at Chung.

Elsword didn't say any words but his message was conveyed very clearly. Eve and Rena also held up their weapons and stared at Chung.

His soldiers got instantly disarmed but Chung wasn't startled even for a bit. He held up the weapon he was grabbing then spoke coldly.

"While unworthy of the title, I'll suggest as the one who's representing this Hamel. I won't question any of you if you all assist in the arrest of Ara Haan. Please stand down."

"That won't do. Ara is like a cute little sister to me."

"I won't let anyone capture my friends."

"Trying to blatantly arrest her without hearing anything out, how rude of you."

At Rena's words, everyone gave their words as well. Add snorted after realizing that things went really wrong.

"Kukukukuk, Fine. I'll make you submit by force, brat."

"I clearly gave all of you your chances....."

Chung's eyes narrowed after he spoke quietly.

"I'll destroy all of you as well if you get in my way."

Wrrrrrrr, an ominous sound. A chill went down Add's spine soon as he realized that this sound was coming from the white weapon Chung was carrying.

It wasn't just a blunt weapon?! Then.....

"Everyone, dodge!!"

A shout and thunderous roar rang across the room.

And everything was destroyed.

It was just as Chung said.